WHITHER COMMON LANDS?

Samaj Parivartana Samudaya
Dharwad, et. al.

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Whither Common Lands ?

Rural Poor or Industry ?
Who should benefit from Common Lands, Forestry ?

A case study of people's resistance to the take-over of their common lands and forests by the government and industries.

Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, Dharwad et al.

Dedicated to the affected people
who have been waging a relentless struggle for
reclaiming their common lands from
KPL and other industries

and

to the memory of
late Prof L.T. Sharma
Who pioneered the environmental movement
in Karnataka.

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MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF KUSNUR IN HANGAL TALUKA, DHARWAD DIST. KARNATAKA, INDIA.

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Common Lands Issue and People's Movement

Several fast developments have been taking place in the last few months regarding the issue of the common lands in Karnataka with special reference to the Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd (KPL) - a joint sector company formed by the Karnataka Government and Harihar Polyfibres, a unit of the Birla-owned Gwalior Rayon Silk Manufacturing Company Ltd (GRASIM). As the well-known journalist Kalpana Sharma put it in her article about this issue in the Indian Express of May 19, 1987 "The Supreme Court has before it an issue that is important not just for Karnataka but for the rest of the country."

This booklet - a compilation of several articles by well-known journalists is being brought out with the hope that concerned people from all over the country will come to know about a small social action movement in Karnataka initiated by the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS) and led by the organizations of the local people about this vital issue. We also hope that all concerned people and organizations will extend their whole-hearted co-operation and support so that the movement gets strengthened and people's power gets further built up to counter the "forces ranged against it on the other side: the political and industrial interests as well as of forest officials brought up in a corrupt, colonial, exploitative culture that treats the rural poor as an expendable nuisance" - as Shri. Ajit Bhattacharjea puts in an article in Deccan Herald of 15.6.1988, entitled "Kusnur: Significant Success."

The KPL was formed on November 14, 1984, with the sole purpose of growing eucalyptus as captive plantations for Harihar Polyfibres on 75,000 acres of 'C' and 'D' class lands and forest lands leased for 40 years. These are village common lands that the rural people, especially the poor, have depended on, for meeting their basic needs of fodder for cattle, fuel for cooking, small timber for housing and agricultural implements, green dry leaves for manure, raw material for artisans, and fruits. These vast tracts of village common lands are spread across six districts of Shimoga, Dharwad, Belgaum, Chickmaglur, Uttar Kannada and Hassan. All are in the high rainfall areas of the Malnad belt, including some lands right in the heart of Western Ghats. They have been the major source of the basic needs of over 5,00,000 villagers, most of whom are poor. With one stroke this act of the Government of Karnataka is depriving most of this vast section of the people of their only available village common land, as in Kusnur cluster of villages.

It is this act of the Government that prompted the SPS and other organizations to begin this awareness building process with the affected people, helping them to organize themselves to protest against KPL and try to reclaim their common lands. The movement went through various stages from petitioning the local government officials, to meeting the Chief Minister Shri. Ramakrishna Hegde, pleading to cancel the KPL agreement. These efforts of ordinary men and women were supported by well-known persons like Dr. Shivaram Karanth, Gyanpeeth award winner; Justice Shri. V.M. Tarkunde, radical humanist and well-known Civil libertarian; Justice Shri. D.M.Chandrashekhar, former Chief Justice of the High Court of

Karnataka and Shri. Kadidal Manjappa, former Chief Minister of Karnataka. When all this did not yield any results, affected people in several places held a weeklong series of protest meetings and demonstrations in 1986 beginning on November 14th, the day KPL was formed two years before. This was followed by a major public interest litigation filed in December 1986 by the SPS in the Supreme Court.

The other petitioners included the affected people, Dr. Shivaram Karanth, representatives of Voluntary Agencies including Shri. Anil Agarwal of the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi. The filing of this petition was made possible by a grant of Rs. 15,000/- from the Committee for Implementing Legal Aid Schemes (CILAS), part of the Ministry of Law and Justice, New Delhi. In a significant development, the Supreme Court issued a stay order on March 24, 1987 to maintain the status quo with regard to possession of land. However, the KPL continued its operations without any regard to the Supreme Court stay order.

It was against this background that the people of Kusnur and surrounding villages decided to conduct a non-violent direct action (Satyagraha) on November 14,1987, the third anniversary day of the formation of KPL. This and subsequent events have received wide publicity and Kusnur has now become a well-known place. They also decided to conduct Kittiko-Hachchiko ("Pluck and plant") Satyagraha on a larger scale during the monsoon of 1988. Accordingly, they planned a training programme on non-violent direct action on April 29 to May 1, 1988 in Somasagar, a village 8 kms. from Kusnur. The violent behaviour of the KPL field staff and holding up of the taxi of Shri. Ajit Bhattacharjea during this camp for more than 1 hour by KPL toughs sparked off more resentment among the villagers towards KPL and the article of Shri. Bhattacharjea about the incident contributed to spreading the concern of the villagers of Kusnur and surrounding villages to the people of Karnataka and outside. The organization of the local people Guddanadu Abhivruddhi Samiti planned two Satyagrahas on June 20, 1988 in Kusnur and July 4, 1988 in Hirebasur. Concerned with this confrontation between people and the Government, the Senior Officers of the Government of Karnataka called a meeting with the SPS representatives in the chambers of the Chief Secretary in Bangalore on June 3, 1988. As a result of this meeting, an agreement was reached between the people and the Government to appoint one man commission of Dr. Madhav Gadgil to study the issue of common lands with special reference to KPL; and the Government to suspend the KPL operations in the Dharwad District and the people to call off the Satyagrahas until the report of Dr. Gadgil is completed.

However, the Government was unable to stop the KPL which continued its plantations work in full swing and the Madhav Gadgil Commission is yet to be appointed. Deeply disappointed by the Government going back on its word, the people decided to conduct a symbolic Satyagraha against the continuation of the KPL operations on August 8, 1988, the Quit India Day.

The satyagraha on August 8th became another important milestone in this people's movement to regain their common lands. Police arrested 52 Satyagrahis including six women as they were proceeding towards the land occupied illegally by the KPL for their pluck and plant' Satyagraha. This has made people further fearless and more determined to

continue the movement with greater vigour.

Genesis of the Problem

The genesis of this problem can be traced to the colonial days, around the middle of the 19th century when the British decided to governmentise the common lands, including forests. This process of colonization of the Common Property Resources (CPR's) and its consequent adverse effects on rural people especially the poor were understood by concerned thinkers of the times like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. He warned the people against H.M.'s Government's conspiratorial designs through the Forest Department in the following words as early as 1882 in his Marathi book "Shetkaryacha Aasud" (Cultivator's whip-cord):

"In the past the peasants who had small pieces of land who couldn't eke out enough from it for their survival used to eat fruits from the nearby forests and used to collect leaves, flowers and dried tree branches and by selling these to others supplemented their income. They also used to maintain a couple of cows or goats and were living happily in their villages depending on the village common grazing land. But H.M.'s Government's conspiratorial bureaucracy have used their foreign intelligence and have newly established the great forest department and have incorporated all mountains, hills, vallies alongwith barren lands, and village common grazing lands in this department thus making it impossible for the goats of the poor peasants to find even breathing space in the forests...".

Our own State and Central Governments, after 1947, have accelerated this process of governmentisation by furthering the stranglehold of the Government on the CPRs again through the Forest Department. Even the village common lands have not been spared. All this to cater to the commercial interests at enormous cost to the rural poor. They now have gone one further step by privatizing common lands through the joint sector companies such as the KPL for the sole benefit of a private corporation like the Harihar Polyfibres. This industry along with its sister concern, has very badly polluted the Tungabhadra river, a major lifeline of Karnataka, for a long stretch, driving the poor like fisherfolk, shepherds, farmers and washerfolk, to the wall.

This process is best described by the Second Statement of Shared Concern at the end of the Second Citizens Report on the State of India's Environment published by the Centre for Science and Environment.

"The process of transforming India into a wasteland, which began under the British rule, has continued under the post-independence governments. The most brutal assault has been on the country's common property resources, on its grazing lands, forests, rivers, ponds, lakes, coastal zones and increasingly on the atmosphere. The use of these common property resources has been organised and encouraged by the state in a manner that has led to their relentless degradation and destruction. And sanction for this destructive exploitation has been obtained by the state in the name of `economic advancement' and `scientific management'.

"Nature can never be managed well unless the people closest to it are involved in its

management and healthy relationship is established between nature, society and culture. Common natural resources were earlier regulated through diverse, decentralised, Community Control systems. But the State's policy of converting common property resources into government property resources has put them under the control of centralised bureaucracies, who in turn have put them at the service of the more powerful. Today, with no participation of the common people in the management of local resources, even the poor have become so marginalised and alienated from their environment that they are ready to discount their future and sell away the remaining natural resources for a pittance."

Solution to the Problem

The solution to these major problems lies, in our opinion, in the organizing of the affected people and supporting their struggle. It is the organizations of the rural poor like the Guddanadu Abhivruddhi Samithi (Hill-area Development Committee) of Kusnur Group of villages which have to play the primary role in this struggle. Voluntary Agencies like the SPS can play a supporting role in this people's struggle by organizing environmental education camps for deepening the understanding of the issues involved, facilitating scientific studies by people-oriented scientists, facilitating contract with government officials for possible documenting of the problems and possible local solutions, exploring legal initiatives for redressal of injustice and, finally, holding training programmes for non-violent direct action (Satyagrahas).

Many leading Scientists and Environmentalists have documented the dependence of the poor on the common lands for their subsistence living e.g. N.S. Jodha of ICRISAT, Hyderabad has documented in a major study covering 80 villages in 21 districts in 7 dry states that the common lands are a major source of employment and income generation for the rural poor; the income derived ranging from Rs.530 to Rs.830, higher than income generated by most anti-poverty programmes.

These common lands are the last resource base left for the poor as the forests have been destroyed and the rivers polluted, all for "industrial development."

As the core of this approach is the process of empowerment of the poor to regain their control over the natural resources and to establish a harmonious relationship between the human beings, nature and culture. The leading advocates of the poor and democracy like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Jyotiba Phule and M.N.Roy, warned against the process of centralization of power and advocated the decentralised organizing of the poor as the only way to empower the poor and achieve free democracy. Both M.K. Gandhi and M.N. Roy also warned against centralised political parties and asked their colleagues to disband the Indian National Congress and the Radical Democratic Party respectively and go to the poor to organize the real Swarajya.

When small social action movements like the one in Kusnur cluster villages spread to many parts of the country, these groups, together with supporting groups like the SPS, can

hope to stop the accelerating degradation of environment and begin to re-establish community control over natural resources. Then the rural poor could use these resources in an equitable and sustainable way. That is precisely the idea behind the movement in Kusnur village cluster where people are not only trying to reclaim their common lands, but also learn, during the struggle itself, as to how to make the common lands more productive, how to develop local organizations to control these resources and ensure equitable distribution. The people of Hirebasur, a village 9 km from Kusnur (2 kms away from Kusnur) - and those of Janmatti Tanda- a hamlet of 60 families of semi-nomadic tribe - are exploring how best to develop these common lands, both parampok land and forest land.

We are most hopeful that the concerned groups in other parts of the country will critically examine the common lands in their areas and attempts of industries to grab village common lands. They can try to organise the rural poor to retain control over their common lands and to develop and utilise them more effectively in an equitable way.

Appeal for Support : No Time to Lose

As the article "Kusnur: Significant Success" clearly points out: "Though the Karnataka Government has been forced to recognise the destructive impact of operations of Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd (KPL) on the meagre livelihood of the landless rural poor and announce an enquiry, the battle is far from over. The activists cannot sit back."

The challenges ahead can be met only if all concerned people from the voluntary sector in particular, and all sections of the society in general, work toget her to combine our strength to facilitate the empowerment of the poor to assert their legitimate rights on the natural resources like the common lands. The common lands need to be reclaimed so that they can be developed to meet people's basic need of fodder, fuel, small timber, etc in an equitable and sustainable way. For this, we badly need to spread this movement to other areas and to mobilize human and financial resources for effectively supplementing local people's struggles by holding environmental education camps, conducting scientific studies of the issues, exploring legal initiatives and conducting non-violent direct action (Satyagraha).

We request concerned persons from all sections of the society to extend their valuable support to this social action movement in any way you think best, especially by contacting other individuals or organizations concerned about such issues; some of our suggestions for your consideration in this regard are:

1. Spreading the movement to other areas: As this is a national issue and industrial interests in many other States are also trying to grab common lands for industrial plantations, (e.g.in Orissa), it is most essential to work with the affected, or likely to be affected, people and facilitate their organizing so that small social action movements can be started there; this is the best way to ensure opposition to commercial interests in the beginning itself and also to increase the collective strength of several efforts of local people to regain control over their common lands and develop them for equitable distribution.

2. Participation in our events: We have been very gratified by the co-sponsoring of the

Satyagraha by around 15 voluntary agencies on November 14, 1987 and their sending representatives to participate in the Satyagraha. We were also very happy that many groups had shown keen interest to participate in the planned Satyagraha on June 20th 1988, which was called off by an agreement with the Government. Also, expression of solidarity and 'Best Wishes' from many groups were also sources of encouragement.

3. Financial Support for the Movement: As we are operating on very limited resources, we would greatly appreciate any financial support you can provide or generate through your friends and organisations you know of and others who would be interested in this cause. (Kindly make the cheque payable to Tungabhadra Parisara Samiti and mail to: Dr. S.L.Pawar, Near Post Office, Ranibennur-581115.) We have been heartened by some support that we have received already and look forward to more support.

4. Writing to the Governments about this issue: As an expression of your solidarity and mobilizing public opinion, you may consider writing to the Chief Minister of Karnataka urging him to cancel KPL agreement (with a copy to the Prime Minister and Secretaries Department of Environment, New Delhi and Department of Ecology and Environment, Bangalore); if possible please send us a copy of the same.

5. Spreading the word about the Movement: As this Company represents a major threat to the village common lands by the powerful vested interests, we request you to write to newspapers or in the newsletters of voluntary or other organizations and also speak to interested groups. This booklet may also be made available to local journalists and concerned persons.

The above are only some examples of what can be done. We count on your resourcefulness and deep concern for this national issue and the rural poor.

We look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely,

Action Committee for Protection of Common Lands:

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20.6.88

The Supreme Court has before it an issue that is important not just for Karnataka but also for the rest of the country too.

Last December (1986), a number of individuals, including Kannada litterateur Dr. Shivaram Karanth and environmental groups, filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court challenging the formation of a joint-sector company called the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL) and the Karnataka Government's decision to lease to it over 70,000 acres of degraded and reserved forest land in four high-rainfall districts for captive eucalyptus plantations to meet the pulpwood needs of the Harihar Polyfibers, a unit of the Birla-owned Gwalior Rayon and Silk Manufacturing company (GRASIM). The petitioners contend that this will deprive poor villagers of the use of these common lands to meet their basic needs of fodder, fuel and small timber and that eucalyptus monocultures will have an adverse long-term impact on the environment.

Rural Poor or Industry?

Who should benefit from Common Lands, Forestry?

The petition focuses on an area of conflict which is likely to be replicated in many other states, as State Governments attempt to meet both the raw material needs of forest-based industries and satisfy the basic requirements of fuel and fodder of the rural poor.

Great temptation

The temptation to turn common lands into plantations of fast-growing species for industrial raw material is greater as community fuelwood plantations require far more attention and involvement of the local community and the bureaucracy. Plantations of eucalyptus, on the other hand, do not need protection from stray cattle, for instance, as they will not eat the saplings or the leaves. Thus their success rate is higher without too much investment and the returns even higher because of the almost insatiable appetite of forest-based industries.

Apart from this recent conflict over the use of common lands, environmentalists have for many years questioned the motives and the wisdom of the Karnataka Government's policy of encouraging eucalyptus plantations. People have watched with consternation as programmes such as social forestry, which were designed specifically with the needs of the poor in mind and on the basis of which states like Karnataka have been able to attract aid from the World Bank and the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) of UK, have been distorted by the State Government into commercial forestry.

This has been evident from the inception of the social forestry programme. The State Government encouraged planting of eucalyptus almost to the exclusion of all other species. The suitability of local species was either overlooked or not studied adequately.

Environmentalists suspect that from the start the main concern of the State Government was to satisfy the raw material needs of the paper and rayon industries which had initially established themselves in the State because of the availability of abundant forest resources. Having exhausted supplies from the natural forests (bamboo groves around Dandeli in North Karnataka, site of a paper factory, have almost disappeared,) the industries had begun to bring in raw material from neighbouring states. The State Government then devised ways of encouraging farmers to grow eucalyptus and has now launched on a scheme to do the same on common lands which come under the Forest Department.

A report on social forestry in Karnataka, prepared by D.M.Chandrashekhar, a former Chief Justice of Karnataka, B.V.Krishna Murti, a retired professor of economics and S.R.Ramaswamy, Editor of Kannada monthly "Utthana" and convener of the Mannu Rakshana Koota (Save Soil Forum), which was released in March, reveals that the World Bank and the ODA-aided social forestry project in the State had merely encouraged the conversion of private farmlands into eucalyptus plantations with a density as high as 5,000 saplings per hectare. According to the report, of the 1,49,500 hectares of land brought under social forestry so far since 1983, 1,20,000 hectares (81 per cent) is on private farmlands.

A sample survey of Kolar district reveals that response to the scheme, under which the Forest Department supplies free saplings, came mainly from big farmers with more than 10 acres of land, incidentally.

While a mere 30 per cent of the biomass from these intensive plantations is available as fuelwood and small timber, the bulk is sold to the Viscose Rayon Fibre and Paper Industries. The Directorate of Economics and Statistics of the Government of Karnataka, in its review of social forestry in Kolar and Bangalore districts in 1984 and a follow-up on the marketing of farm forestry produce in these two districts in 1986, reported :

"Between April 1984 and July 1985, around 96.2 percent of eucalyptus produced in Bangalore district and 97.5 per cent of eucalyptus produced in Kolar district has been marketed."

"The entire quantity of eucalyptus sold in Bangalore district and 97 per cent of the quantity sold in Kolar district was consumed as industrial raw material by M/s. Harihar Polyfibers; and hardly three per cent sold in Kolar district has been used as fuel."

Unrelenting efforts

If this is an illustration of what is happening in the name of social forestry, those who have

prepared the report on social forestry in Karnataka are justified in asking "Why the World Bank and the ODA do not explicitly state that their purpose in supporting the so-called social forestry project in Karnataka is to ensure expanding supplies of eucalyptus wood for industry and construction?"

In reaction to the State Government's unrelenting efforts at using social forestry schemes to suit the needs of commercial interests, a remarkable environmental movement has emerged in the State which has few parallels in the rest of India. Apart from having urban-based participants, who have been able to argue from angles, scientific and economic, against the Governments' policy, the movement also has a grassroots base in the areas where people are most affected by these policies.

The latest clash between these environmental groups and the State Government, the subject matter of the Supreme Court writ petition mentioned earlier, raises another pertinent question - for whose benefit should common lands be used? Under the Wastelands Development Programme, launched with much fanfare by the Prime Minister, wastelands are described as degraded forest lands, which include common lands or C and D lands which have been transferred from the Revenue Department to the Forest Department, and fallow lands which include grazing lands, tank foreshore lands, roadsides and canal banks etc. An estimated 2.55 million hectares constitute wastelands in Karnataka. However, as these common lands have traditionally been accessible to the village people, and are especially precious to those without any land, one would assume that any programme to reforest such lands should give primacy to the needs of those dependent on them.

Once again, however, the Karnataka Government has revealed that its priorities are somewhat different. Its move to hand over 78,000 acres of C and D land in the high-rainfall area to the joint sector Karnataka Pulpwood Limited which will supply pulpwood to Harihar Polyfibers, is a vivid illustration of its concerns. Last month, the Supreme Court stayed the transfer of this land to KPL till the petition is heard.

The case is additionally significant as the Karnataka Government has pending before it 13 similar proposals from forest-based industries to raise fast-growing species on C and D lands.

Despite popular protests and reasons presented by economists, social workers and scientists, the State Government is not convinced that its policy is wrong. In 1983 the Economic and Planning Council of Karnataka, the now almost defunct "Think Tank" of Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde, met with those objecting to the massive eucalyptus drive. It concluded that although eucalyptus was not recommended for replacing natural forest, it was ideal for agricultural land or degraded land for environmental reasons as it would decrease the runoff. The issue addressed was the suitability of the particular species for forestry projects in terms of soil and water conservation and not its suitability in terms of the needs of the poor for fuel and fodder.

Four years later, despite increasing protests and court cases, the Government's position is unchanged and its comprehension of the issue just as limited. This was evident in an hour-long conversation I had with Mr. Hegde last month in Bangalore. He preferred to dismiss the environmentalists objections to his Government's programmes as some strange dislike for a particular species, namely eucalyptus. He said he had no power to prevent farmers from growing the tree when it was more remunerative than ragi. (According to the report mentioned earlier, by the beginning of next year, an estimated 2,20,000 hectares of foodcrop lands will have been turned over to intensive eucalyptus monocultures).

And although Mr. Hegde reiterated that eucalyptus should not be taken up as a general practice and should certainly not be encouraged in high rainfall areas such as North Kanara, his Government is doing exactly that in the districts of Shimoga, Chikmagalur, Dharwad and Belgaum where the C and D lands under dispute are located.

Neither Mr. Hegde, nor his advisers, have paid heed to the fundamental issue raised : For whose benefit should common lands and programmes such as social forestry be used? For industry, or for the rural poor?

Courtesy: Indian Express 19 May ,1987

REVERSE DEVELOPMENT - I

SATYAGRAHA IN KUSNUR

AJIT BHATTACHARJEA

Kusnur, a fair-sized village sprawled over the gently rolling uplands of Hangal tehsil, Dharwad district, may go down in history as the place where the non-violent campaign for assertion of popular rural rights against industrial exploitation began.

Here, exploitation takes the form of planting an eucalyptus forest on land previously available for villagers. Cattle and sheep could be grazed there; local craftsmen could gather the grass and vines needed to weave baskets and mats; women could gather branches and leaves for cooking fuel; seasonal fruits and herbs could be picked free.

Since the area was planted with eucalyptus saplings, the poorest villagers have been the hardest hit. Nothing else grows where eucalyptus is planted; no grass, no undergrowth, no flowers; no animal will touch its bark or leaves. No birds sing, for no bird will nest there.

Greedy Plant

Eucalyptus trees are useful only to satisfy the enormous appetite of the Harihar Polyfibers plant at Harihar about 90 km. away.

Huge tracts of forest land throughout the region have been converted into eucalyptus plantations to feed the Birla-owned plant which produces the fibre needed to manufacture rayon and other synthetic materials. The plant has also polluted a long stretch of the Tungabhadra river, on whose bank it is located, causing sickness to men and animals, killing fish and polluting riverside land.

The Kusnur satyagraha last Saturday was the first of a campaign to return village common lands to their rightful, traditional, co-operative owners. It was organised by

The Satyagrahis march with saplings in their hands towards their common lands now occupied by KPL. Women in the forefront.....Kusnur....

the Samaja Parivartana Samudaya (SPS), an expanding group set up in Dharwad (Karnataka) in 1983 to campaign for environmental protection, rooted in local and public awareness. The first battle of a long non-violent war was waged at Kusnur, after considerable training and preparation.

Cases Filed

Apart from holding training camps and studying social forestry and wasteland development schemes SPS has filed public interest litigation against Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd.(KPL), a joint-sector company formed by the Karnataka Forest Plantations Corporation and Harihar Polyfibers to feed the Birla company's huge requirements. In fact Karnataka Pulpwood has become a brutal engine of exploitation, allowing nobody to stand in its way.

It was the joint-sector company (the State Government owns 51 per cent of its shares) that had planted eucalyptus seedlings on Kusnur common land and its men, armed with axes and scythes were much in evidence when the Satyagraha began.

A confrontation was avoided due to the fortunate presence of a young Assistant Commissioner on his first posting after leaving the IAS training school in Mussoorie, where he had been given the opportunity to study the Chipko movement in the Garhwal Himalayas. Under his instructions, police permitted the Satyagrahis to complete their token campaign of uprooting 100% eucalyptus saplings and planting 100 fruit and fodder - producing trees in exchange (the slogan is : one for one), without the KPL men being allowed to intervene. SPS-trained volunteers restrained village hot-heads from reacting to provocation.

Among the volunteers SPS was able to mobilise, were four local doctors (one had given up a prosperous practice to devote all his time to rural uplift), a senior advocate and an experienced social worker from Gujarat. The arrangements for the satyagraha were a model of enthusiasm and discipline. Drizzle and the blessing of light rain, after a prolonged drought, were an auspicious symbol.

More than a thousand men, women and children from Kusnur and nearby villages marched around for two hours, waving banners and led by drummers, until they reached the site of the Satyagraha, on the slope of a hill. Batches of Satyagrahis, sapling shoots in hand, went to the place picked for uprooting and planting, around a fold of the hill so that the entire gathering would not be tempted to rush forward in their enthusiasm and uproot the entire forest. Police co-operation was

.....Men following

symbolised by a stout havildar pointing out the best spots to plant the new saplings!

Village Oath

The villagers of Kusnur have pledged to water and tend the saplings they planted. Whether they will, and whether the KPL will permit them to do so, remains to be seen.

Anyway, Kusnur has highlighted the issue on the eve of a national seminar on common lands organised by SPS and the Institute of Science, Bangalore, in Dharwad on November 23 and 24. The seminar is supported by the Centre's Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Forests.

Efforts by SPS and several other volunteer organisations to persuade the Karnataka Government to change its policies have not yielded fruit. Even a last-minute memorandum to Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde on November 1, seeking his intervention by November 10, four days before the Kusnur Satyagraha, evoked no response. Local Janata Party workers were noticeable by their absence.

According to the memorandum, over five lakh rural people, especially the poor, are suffering in the districts of Dharwad, Shimoga, Chikmagalur, and Belgaum following the seizure of 75,000 acres of common lands by KPL "for the sole purpose of growing eucalyptus and other fastgrowing varieties....for the captive consumption of Harihar Polyfibers".

Public Warned

The memorandum drew attention to articles by Dr.Shivaram Karanth in which "he warned the public of Karnataka about the growing friendship between the Government of Karnataka and the Birla Industry: Harihar Polyfibers, a highly polluting industry". Appeals have also been made by former Chief Minister Kadidal Manjappa, former Chief Justice D.M.Chandrasekhar and noted jurist V.M.Tarkunde to the State Government to cancel the agreement setting up the Karnataka Pulpwood Corporation.

KPL was set up on November 14, 1984, by the Janata Government. This was why the same date was chosen for the token Satyagraha. The full campaign is being planned on a much more extensive front before the next monsoon, when it will be easier to tend the one-for-one saplings to be planted.

Nov. 19, 1987, Deccan Herald.

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REVERSE DEVELOPMENT - II

STATE-AIDED EXPLOITATION

AJIT BHATTACHARJEA

Nothing could capture the futile waste and double standards involved in the crores being pumped into anti-poverty programmes better than the remark of a shepherd in Dharwad district : "The Government lends us money to buy sheep and cows, but takes away our grazing lands".

Behind the tragic farce played on the poorest of the poor are a rapacious Forest Department, callous industrial interests and a Government immune to the problems of the poor, in whose name it gets votes.

On a brief tour of Dharwad and Belgaum districts, I saw grim evidence of the despoliation of natural resources in the name of social forestry and wasteland reclamation. The region would be much better off without such catchphrases. The land being ravaged by the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL) has been handed over to them by the State Forest Department, much of it claimed to be degraded.

Vivid Example

The contrast between what KPL says and does is seen most vividly in Dhamane, a small enclave of Karnataka surrounded by Maharashtra territory, not too far from Belgaum. It is in the foothills of the Western Ghats. The well-watered area has thick forests interspersed with fields of paddy and grain.

As one motors up and down the low ranges, one sees the land totally deforested with a few young eucalyptus saplings on one side and thick forest on the other. That is the dividing line between Karnataka and Maharashtra. Perhaps because the enclave is seldom visited by senior officials, the rich forests have been classed as degraded and handed over to the KPL, which is in the process of actually degrading them.

An unstated justification may be that much of the area will be submerged with the construction of a second hydro-electric project in the area. The first is the Supa dam, which is already up, complete with high aqueducts to convey the water into canals.

Needless Dams

Why such an expensive irrigation project is needed in a high rainfall area is difficult to understand. And now there is to be a second dam because the first has been found to have too low a head of water to generate enough power. The advice of environmental experts on the adverse effects of such projects does not seem to have seeped down to the local engineers who must be busy calculating the pickings to be made from such expensive projects.

Even the limited experience of trying to plant eucalyptus in a high rainfall area has not deterred the KPL; many of the sapling stems have developed the reddish tinge that indicated disease. Saplings of other softwood trees are now to be found in the local nursery. But they, too, are of varieties that are of no use to the locals.

The basic reason for this neglect of local needs is the colonial approach of the Forest Department that is still concerned only with revenue from forest land. The usual forest tree wealth, rich in undergrowth, fruits and berries, is not valued by them precisely because it is of value to local villagers and their herds of sheep and cattle, as well as local craftsmen. Exotic varieties, like eucalyptus, are favoured because they need little supervision.The timber is readily available to sell to pulpwood factories.

There are also rich pickings to be made from destruction of forests and growing of the trees that

The Satyagrahis take oath of Truth and Non-violence before they embark upon " Pluck & Plant " direct action : Kusnur , 14th November 1987.

Planting a local variety of tree sapling at Kusnur

industry wants on such a vast scale. Only this can explain the militancy of the KPL. The corruption of forest officers is a byword in the area. The extravagantly expensive housebuilt by a junior forest official with no other legal sources of income, is a talking point in Hubli.

The Forest Department has been able to take charge of vast tracts of land because it has claimed all land that is not owned, which includes the common lands traditionally available to villagers for grazing and other purposes. By setting up the Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd., with 51 percent investment of public funds, the State Government took the exploitation a big step further. It was established only to provide the raw-material needed by Harihar Polyfibers.

Loop-Hole

According to the 40-year lease agreement, only low category and degraded forest lands are to be handed over to the KPL. But the agreement contains a catch-all provision stating that "with the approval of the Chief Conservator of Forests, marginal adjustment of land in the localities sanctioned by the Government as to make a compact block of plantation area which will be economical for both cultivation and protection is permitted".

The ultimate responsibility is that of the State Government. Its callousness has many facets. There is enough evidence to show that the State Pollution Control Board has favoured the Birla company by diluting the recommendations of the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Calcutta, on the impact of the effluents from Harihar Polyfibers and Gwalior Rayon (Grasilene) factories on aquatic life in the Tungabhadra near Harihar and the report of the Central Pollution Control Board to the effect that the noxious zinc values in the final effluent was 21 times the legal limit.

Prior Approval

The State Government has also ignored a letter from the Secretary to the Centre's Ministry of Environment and Forests stating that the Government of India will not permit any plantations to be raised on forest lands for production of raw materials for industries, either on a lease basis or as a joint-sector programme with the State Forest Department/State Forest Development Corporation.

The letter goes on to state that any such proposals cleared without the prior approval of the Centre, after the coming into force of the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980, should be cancelled.

This makes the functioning of the KPL illegal. But for its own reasons, the State Government has persisted with its deal with Harihar Polyfibers.

As if this were not enough, nothing has been done to prevent continuing pollution of the Tungabhadra by the Birla company, in the face of private and official studies showing how muchdamage was being done.

Deccan Herald, 20 November 1987

KUSNUR STRUGGLE PHASE TWO - I

KPL STRIKES BACK

AJIT BHATTACHARJEA

About 60 men and women (and some of their children) from surrounding villages, attending a three-day camp last weekend on expanding their satyagraha to regain common lands handed over to Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd., (KPL), found their commitment to non-violence tested earlier than expected.

The camp was being held in Somsagar village, nine km. from Kusnur, where the satyagraha started on November 14 last year.

Having written on the Kusnur Satyagraha *(Deccan Herald,* Nov. 19 and 20, 1987), I was there to assess the next phase, and became an eyewitness and victim of the terror tactics unleashed by KPL.

It was Friday, April 29, the first day of the camp organised by the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS), the volunteer environmental group in Dharwad that had organised the Kusnur satyagraha to initiate a non-violent struggle to assert popular rights against industrial exploitation.

The day had begun peacefully enough. The participants, who came from the 11 villages in the area that had lost their common lands to KPL, discussed the events of November 14, when a potentially violent confrontation between satyagrahis and KPL guards had been defused by the local Assistant Commissioner. He permitted them to uproot 100 eucalyptus saplings and replace them with saplings of fruit and fodder-producing trees.

Sole Beneficiary

Young SPS activists pointed out how narrowly violence had been avoided by the presence of a sympathetic IAS officer. But this was unusual. Normally, the police and the local administration would be ranged behind KPL,

Women's Group discusses its role in the people's movement (Somsagar , 29-4-88)

a joint-sector company in which the State Government has 51 per cent shares. The wide-ranging influence on politicians and forest officials of Harihar Polyfibres, the Birla company which is the sole beneficiary of the KPL's eucalyptus plantations, was also evident.

It was, therefore, essential to maintain non-violent discipline in the face of provocation. For, violence would play into the hands of KPL and those behind it and provide an excuse for official action against the satyagrahis.

The sun was setting when we proceeded to a spot, near the neighbouring village of Hirebasur, that locals had recommended for the next, bigger satyagraha on the eve of the monsoons (the best time for planting).

The proposed site was on the bank of the local tank, where a few plants and bushes had yet to be bulldozed by KPL. Beyond it, in serried ranks extending over the low hills to the horizon, were eucalyptus trees in various stages of growth. No other tree had survived. A young villager broke off a twig to sniff its pungent emanation.

Multiple Benefits

Amid the sparse surviving vegetation, I was shown the plant with wide leaves that villagers used, and sold, as plates for festive occasions; grasses that were woven into mats and baskets and served as fodder, berries from which pickle was made. Before KPL had bulldozed the area, I was told, enough trees, plants and grasses grew to feed all

Training in Non-violent Direct Action (Somsagar April 28, 1988)

their sheep and cattle; practise their crafts; supply medicinal herbs, green manure, timber for huts and branches and leaves for firewood. Now KPL even prevented them from fishing in the tank.

The plight of the villagers was a graphic illustration of government approved and financed projects that further impoverish the rural poor to provide raw materials for an industry producing artificial fabrics in the name of development. KPL has got a Rs.Seven-crore loan from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development !

Evidence of the zeal with which KPL functioned (the spin-off for anyone involved is substantial) soon appeared. Six toughs, calling themselves KPL guards, rushed up and started abusing us. One, a particularly repulsive goon, snatched the broken eucalyptus twig and threatened repraisals.

I asked a photographer with us to snap the scene. It was dusk and he used his flash. At this, another guard lunged at him and grabbed the camera strap. A burly young activist intervened and twisted his wrist to free the camera. Shouting abuse, he withdrew.

Minutes later, he returned, claiming to have lost his watch. Some villagers lit their torches to look for it, but no watch was visible. Neither the activist nor I had seen one on him.

But now the guards insisted that the watch had been stolen. There would be trouble unless we returned it or compensated them for it. They grew more menacing.. A woman fainted. But the more experienced satyagrahis (who had been campaigning against the pollution of the Tungabhadra river by the Harihar Polyfibres factory) prevented a clash.

The worst was yet to come. As the convener (and chief organiser) of the SPS, S.R Hiremath; its burly secretary Ranjan Rao Yerdoor (he had rescued the camera); photographer Ravi and I were returning to Haveri in my taxi, four men stopped us on the road. The man who claimed to have lost his watch was one; the others were identified as local KPL functionaries. They threatened violence unless the watch was returned or suitable amends were made and placed a cycle in front of the car.

Flash Point

We offered to take them to the police station, but they became more abusive. Five more KPL workers joined them and threatened to pull us out and burn us with kerosene. We decided not to respond, somewhat heartened when they heeded the taxi-driver's appeal to them not to dent his taxi.

The confrontation went on for an hour and a half while each one tried a new threat. The road was deserted- it was well after dark- except for four or five villagers who hurried by.

Then, unexpectedly, one of the men said they would meet us next day and the cycle was pulled away. Shouts and the flicker of torches on the road behind us indicated why. A large body of villagers came running. All but one of the KPL men disappeared into the darkness. As the villagers surrounded him, our burly secretary jumped out to protect him.

For the next 10 minutes, one villager after another came forward with folded hands to express regret. I, their guest, had been harassed near their village. Then they ran beside the car until we passed the local KPL office, half a kilometre away, to ensure our safety. Their affection and sympathy more than made up for the ugly incident.

Encounter with abusive KPL guard (facing camera) at Hirebasur village.

For the remaining two days, the camp was undisturbed. There was no sign of the KPL or its brutish guards. But the encounters gave a new edge to the group discussions. Some of the men found it hard to contain their anger. The guards would never learn

unless they were thrashed, they said. If they kill two of us, we will kill two. That's the only way.

State Force

Again, the SPS activists had to explain that thrashing the guards would achieve nothing. It would be countered by all the force the State commanded. They must never lose sight of their primary objective; to regain their common lands. This could be achieved only by unity, discipline and non-violence, whatever the provocation.

It was a convincing education in non-violent struggle for all, including me. The young activists were heard with respect. They slept on the floor of the village school, ate what the villagers brought, spoke their language, sang their songs (touched up with slogans). They had been working in the area for nearly a year. After watching the corruption, lust for power & petty in-fighting in New Delhi & Bangalore, to be with them was a cleansing privilege.

The villagers responded by deciding to go ahead with the pre-monsoon satyagraha. This time they would uproot at least a thousand eucalyptus saplings and replace them with a mix of traditional and fast-growing fruit and fodder trees and grasses. Women would take the lead.

The first mass satyagraha would be at Kusnur on June 20; the second at Hirebasur (the site we had inspected) on July 4.

Between now and then the organisers - local and SPS - would hold camps in each village for further training in non-violence. Perhaps they should wait a little longer before fixing the dates, I suggested. The chief local organiser G.N.Arkachari, preferred to announce them. The die had been cast.

Deccan Herald, May 5, 1988

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KUSNUR STRUGGLE PHASE TWO - II

A CORRUPTED SYSTEM

AJIT BHATTACHARJEA

Ever since Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd. (KPL) was set up on November 14, 1984, it has aroused intense controversy.

Scientists, environmentalists, social workers and journalists have charged the State Government with colluding with Harihar Polyfibres in an enterprise that will further impoverish the rural poor for the benefit of a Birla-owned company making rayon.

It is hard to conceive of a more severe indictment of a political process that calls itself democratic and socialist, or of more patent misuse of executive authority. Instructions from the Central Ministry of Environment and Forests that plantations raised on forest lands to produce raw materials for industry should not be permitted, and any such agreement cleared without the Centre's prior approval, after the Forest (conservation) Act of 1980 came into force, should be cancelled, have been ignored.

Why Eucalyptus

The land handed over to KPL by the Forest Department described as "C and D class", as well as "degraded Forest Lands", until taken over, were common lands available to the poorer villagers to meet their needs for fodder, firewood, poles and thatch for housing, weaving materials and medicine. KPL has grown mainly eucalyptus, which apart from its questionable environmental consequences, provides none of this (which is one reason why it is preferred).

Lops and branches are supposed to be made available to local villagers, but this and other gestures depend on forest officials known for corruption, and KPL, whose hostility to the villagers I witnessed personally in unpleasant encounters with guards who behave as goondas.

The area originally meant to be given to KPL was 9,136 hectares. When found insufficient, it was conveniently raised to 30,000 hectares. A provision in the lease agreement empowering the Chief Conservator of Forests to approve "marginal adjustment...so as to make a compact lock of plantation areas" proved useful. It enabled rich forests to be handed over, as I saw on a previous occasion.

The issue was taken to the Supreme Court by the noted Kannada litterateur and environmental leader, Dr.K.S. Karanth; the Director of the Centre For Science and Environment, New Delhi, Anil Agarwal, the

Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS) and affected villagers on December 10, 1986. A stay order was obtained in March 1987 directing KPL to maintain the status quo. The judgment is awaited. Even so, KPL operations continue.

Silence

Yet, no political party has taken up the issue. To the best of my knowledge, it has not been raised in the State Legislature. There is a deafening silence on the subject in official and political Bangalore, though appeals have been made to the Chief Minister and others.

Why? Unfortunately, the reason is obvious. The decision to provide timber to Harihar Polyfibres was taken by the previous Congress(I) regime in Karnataka. The decision to set up KPL to obtain and supply all the timber wanted was taken by the present Janata Government. Even the local MLA has steered clear of the controversy.

Who, then, do legislators represent? The interest of the majority of their constituents or of those who finance their parties' election campaigns? This question is at the root of the disease attacking our political system.

Poverty, disunity and, above all, a conspiracy to keep the poor ignorant (most voters are still illiterate) prevents the majority from knowing and demanding their rights. Partly rivalry- essentially a contest between rival interest groups rather than between rival programmes and ideologies- and the absence of effective restrictions on election expenditure (Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has failed to honour his pledge to introduce suitable legislation for this purpose) has made access to black money the crucial factor. Meanwhile, the steadily mounting cost of elections (at least Rs. 5 lakh per candidate to State legislatures) has made politicians even more dependent on those with the resources to protect their privileges.

Mutual Distrust

The quality of candidates has suffered inevitably. Those sincere about their professions to work for the poor and underprivileged are the last to get financial support. And the generation that won votes for its role in the freedom struggle has passed away.

Consequently, the only effective effort to educate and organise the rural poor, who are more exploitable than the urban, is being done by volunteer groups, called Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOS).Their effectiveness is in direct proportion to the distance they keep from politicians. The distrust is mutual.

Groups like the SPS function on the margin of law. Their only weapon against forces represented by KPL is the Gandhian tradition of non-violent struggle, made much more difficult by the level of provocation to which semi-official exploiting agencies like KPL can descent.

Occasionally, they are helped by the rare breed of official administrator who takes his profession seriously. The majority kowtow to local politicians whose objectives are very different.

Commitment

NGOs that educate and organise the poor have to demonstrate the justice of their cause to the public (they need money) whenever possible. This includes appeals to official institutions set up for this purpose (from which they occasionally get funds), the judiciary and the press. But this involves a great deal of documentation, non-official surveys, correspondence, above all the commitment of volunteers willing to live and work among the poor.

That more and more young people are being attracted to such work is encouraging. Different groups have begun to co-operate and interlink their activities to be more effective. Those that combined to make a success of the three-month-long Save the Western Ghats March have joined to form a general movement for environment aimed at creating awareness of environmental rights and to assist those affected to achieve them. Some of the marchers are assisting the Kusnur satyagraha.

With the optimism of youth, they are convinced that justice will be done and the political system reform itself under public pressure. But can politicians corrupted by dependence on the rich cut the ground from under their own feet? Unless the system does reform itself, however, disruption and violence is inevitable.The seeds are beginning to flower elsewhere in the country.

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KUSNUR :

Significant Success

AJIT BHATTACHARJEA

The success of the peaceful struggle begun in the Kusnur cluster of villages, in Dharwad district, seven months ago against exploitation of common and so-called degraded lands for commercial forestry, is striking, considering the forces ranged against it on the other side.

These consist of political and industrial interests as well as of forest officials brought up in a corrupt, colonial, exploitative culture that treats the rural poor as an expendable nuisance.

Yet the lessons taught by the Kusnur satyagraha go even further than preserving, and possibly expanding, the rights of the rural poor to land to graze animals and procure minor forest produce for their livelihood. It shows that economic exploitation can be countered and social change effected without joining the disruptive political party race funded by black money.

Though the Karnataka Government has been forced to recognise the destructive impact of the operations of Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd. (KPL) on the meagre livelihood of the landless rural poor and announce an inquiry, the battle is far from over. The activists cannot sit back.

Far Beyond

The decision seems to have been taken without consulting the noted environmentalist, Dr. Madhav Gadgil, who is to conduct it. He is away on vacation, but the announcement could not be delayed if the mass pluck-and-plant agitation planned for next Monday was to be averted. The precise workding of the terms of reference may be crucial, for the significance of the struggle goes far beyond Kusnur.

Also, the assurance given to the Kusnur villagers that KPL operations in their district will be suspended until Dr. Gadgil submits his report is only verbal. But neither the villagers nor the

Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS), the non-governmental and non-party organisation that has catalysed and trained them, wants to antagonise the Deputy Commissioner and his colleagues who have shown considerable sympathy for their cause.

It was the young Assistant Commissioner of Hangal Taluk who prevented a clash between villagers and KPL workers on November 14 last year by allowing them to pull out 100 eucalyptus saplings from a KPL plantation and replace them with the same number of saplings of trees valued by the village poor. This gave the campaign a legitimacy that KPL resented.

Legal Ways

Apart from this, the SPS tries to seek the co-operation of constitutional agencies responsible for ensuring social justice. This extends to the Supreme Court, before which a writ petition on KPL operations is pending. Another writ petition on the pollution of the Tungabhadra river by Harihar Polyfibres is before the Karnataka High Court.I was privileged to be present at the November satyagraha and was encouraged to write (*Deccan Herald*, Nov.19,1987) "Kusnur. . . may go down in history as the place where the non-violent campaign for assertion of popular rural rights against industrial exploitation began".

What was particularly offensive was the role of KPL, a joint-sector company in which the State Government holds 51 per cent shares, and the Karnataka Forest Department in handing over not only really degraded land on which nothing grew for legitimate commercial exploitation, but also rich forest land arbitrarily described as degraded. This was only too evident in a stretch of the State border which has lush forest on the Maharashtra side and totally deforested land on the Karnataka side in which eucalyptus saplings were being planted by KPL. The reason for this zeal to grow eucalyptus at any cost for a rich and voracious Birla man-made fibre industry was equally evident: the poor, who have no money for bribes or black money for parties, cannot compete.

In sharp contrast to such cynicism and venality was the youthful enthusiasm of the SPS activists who lived with the village poor to instil the hard training in non-violent struggle. They came from varied backgrounds. All were educated and had given up good careers to work for social change. Assisting them were local doctors, lawyers and other professionals who contributed valuable time from their work for the same objective. Their co-operation renewed faith in the country's future.

More Threats

Training in non-violent struggle continued. KPL's reaction was to step up threats against anyone who challenged its right to destroy whatever came in the way of setting up the eucalyptus and other pulpwood plantations required to meet Harihar Polyfibres' needs. I got a taste of its tactics during a second visit to the area on April 29. The taxi carrying a group of SPS workers and me was held up by KPL toughs for an hour and a half. We were threatened with violence until rescued by local villagers.

The prospect of a pluck-and-plant campaign on a far bigger scale on June 20 made the authorities seek a compromise to head it off. The Chief Secretary to the state government invited the SPS to a meeting in Bangalore on June 3 at which it was proposed that Dr. Gadgil be asked to inquire into the effect on the villagers of giving extensive tracts to KPL. It was suggested that the satyagraha be suspended until Dr.Gadgil submitted his report in about three months. KPL operations in Dharwad district would be suspended for the same period.

Sympathetic

The proposals were put before the Guddanadu Abhivruddhi Samiti, the villagers' organisation, the next day, when the decision to suspend the satyagraha was taken.The villagers formally appreciated the sympathetic attitude of the senior officials. They did not mention the political parties which have shown no interest in their plight. (The original agreement with Harihar Polyfibres was negotiated by the previous Congress (I) Government; KPL's field of operations was widened by the Janata Government.)

Kusnur is only a beginning. Local officials are not always sympathetic. It will take much more work and devotion by volunteer agencies to ensure that the neglected poor get their due. This cannot be achieved by antipoverty handouts of which a high percentage is diverted by the official channels through which they flow and much of the rest goes to influential individuals who are far from poor. Only by educating the poor - a process that governments have consciously neglected- and training them to struggle for their rights can the fruits of economic development go to the growing number who do not get one square meal a day in our country, after 40 years of independence.

Deccan Herald, June 15, 1988

Claiming the commons in Karnataka

Hirebasur is a village in the Hangal taluk of Dharwad district. Divided almost equally among Muslim and Hindu households, the economy of the village rests on a mix of rainfed farming and goat rearing.

While its social and economic profile is quite typical of the area, its environmental situation is not. Or not quite. For Hirebasur is one of the villages of northern Karnataka whose common lands were abruptly constituted as reserved forests and handed over to Karnataka Pulpwoods Limited (KPL), a joint-sector corporation floated by the State Government in association with the Birla-controlled Harihar Polyfibres.

Since 1984, 30,000 hectares of degraded forest and 'C' and 'D' class lands in Shimoga, Chitradurga, and Dharwad districts have been leased to KPL for commercial timber production. While formally controlled by the Revenue Department these lands were used extensively by the surrounding villages for grazing and fuelwood collection. In Karnataka, a State with an exceptionally high level of environmental awareness, this action was not taken lying down. The villagers, in association with the Samaj Parivartan Samudaya (SPS), a local activist group, took the State Government and KPL to the Supreme Court.

Climbing the hill under which Hirebasur is located, we got a bird's eye view of the dependence of the village economy on the commons. For the 200 hectares taken over by KPL are ideally suited for the usufruct of the adjacent villages. Within living memory, villagers say, the tract was a thick forest, providing pasture and small timber. Now it has been planted over with eucalyptus. Useless as fodder and not much better as fuel, eucalyptus does not allow much undergrowth either.

From the hill, we observed the cattle and goat population of Hirebasur, perhaps several hundred in all, emerge from the village in their daily search for food. Having drunk water from a pool of rain-water, the cattle turned leftwards, making for the fields and stubble left over from the harvest. Clearly the eucalyptus plantation did not interest them in the least. The goats, hardier animals and less discriminating in their taste, were however shepherded to the right, away from the fields and towards KPL area. Yet they did not find much there either, and within an hour, they had ranged all over 200-hectare patch.

This neat partitioning of resources between cattle and goats can only be a short-term strategy. For in a couple of months, the fields will be ploughed and prepared for the monsoon sowing, and

Publishers Note

"The Deccan Herald" Bangalore in their Sunday magazine of 5-6-1988 on the occassion of the World Environment Day published the following three interesting articles on the different aspects and the two sides of the issues of common lands and deforestation / afforestation. We are reproducing them with their kind permission.

cattle (and goats) strictly barred from cultivated areas. With the ecology and proprietary status of common lands radically altered by their take-over by KPL, where then would they go? One possible solution lay in the hill on which we sat. A rocky outcrop extending over 20 hectares, it had somehow escaped the roving eye of KPL. However, managed under a system of rotational grazing (with notified areas strictly protected in turn), it could be developed into a community fodder farm, managed preferably by the landless families in the village.

This was the scheme the SPS had proposed to the villagers, and which we sat discussing on the hill. Faced with a sudden shrinkage of their biomass resources, the peasants of Hirebasur could somewhat improve their situation by organising collectively for the production and management of fodder. This was not an easy task, but if successful, could be of immense value in the years ahead. For if they were to regain control over the KPL areas, the experiment on the hill could provide the basis for a more extensive system of fuel and fodder reserves.

In Airani, a village approximately 80 km. from Hirebasur in Ranibennur taluk of the same district, the choices that the villagers face are quite different. For here a fuel and fodder reserve has already been developed, and by none other than the Forest Department. Under the Minimum Needs Programme, the department has successfully raised, over 32 hectares, a high density plantation of subabul. Subabul, although an exotic like eucalyptus, critically differs in that it provides excellent fodder.

As their contract was for three years only, the department, having raised the plants to a height beyond the reach of the foraging cows and goats, has withdrawn without handing over the plot (as they were expected to) to the Mandal Panchayat. There is therefore no effective authority for the management of the subabul forest: it is truely "open access", nobody's property yet, accesible to all. Inevitably, the process of degradation, at the hands of shepherds and their goats, has begun.

As in Hirebasur, the situation urgently calls for collective action by the residents of Airani and other villages in the Mandal. Infact, the locality has in recent years been in the grip of a major struggle against the degradation of an equally important common property resource, water. For Airani, located on the banks of the Tungabhadra, is within a stone's throw of the major production unit of Harihar polyfibres. Confronted with severe health hazards and a declining fish catch owing to the pollution of the river by the factory, the residents of Airani and other riverine villages, aided by the SPS, have lodged a public interest case in the Karnataka High Court against the State Pollution Control Board and Harihar Polyfibres.

Airani is in Aremallapur Mandal. In the adjoining Medleri Mandal, there is yet a third kind of common property problem. Here, the Panchayat has had since 1981 a clear title to 8 hectares of land, on which it has raised a plantation of eucalyptus. The trees are now waiting to be harvested and the Panchayat has called for an auction. However, as the earnest money required is Rs. 5,000 the only bidders will be large contractors, who in turn will sell it to industrial users (including, perhaps, the ubiquitous Harihar Polyfibres). Yet the plantation was raised partly under a Government programme, under whose provisions assets must be retained in the village. As a consequence, the poorer peasants have petitioned the management to sell the wood, at concessional rates for use (chiefly as construction timber) within the Panchayat. The Zilla Parishad having granted a stay on the auction, a court decision is awaited.

These three villages, which I visited along with SPS activists in mid-April, are faced with

quite different problems in the management of their common lands. In Hirebasur, the development of pasture on a degraded hill slope represents a formidable ecological and organisational challenge. In Airani , where a forest already exists, peasants must develop, through their representative institutions or otherwise, an effective system of community management. Finally, Medleri highlights a problem many votaries of "community" control prefer to ignore- the existence of sharp cleavages within village society, wherein the biomass needs of the poor may be at odds with the interest of the more affluent farmers.

These cases are but three variations on a theme that runs right through village life in contemporary India- the colossal and continuing degradation of the biomass resources on which hundreds of millions of Indians (especially small farmers, pastoralists, and the landless) so critically depend. Although much ink has been expended on the "other crisis" (fuelwood), studies suggest that shortages of fodder are as pervasive and in some areas even more critical. According to one estimate, while the annual demand for fuelwood in Karnataka is 12.4 million tonnes, the annual production is 10.4 million tonnes, a shortfall of 16 percent. In the case of fodder, however, the corresponding figures are 35.7 and 23 million tonnes respectively- a shortfall of 33 per cent.

The fodder crisis vividly illustrates the importance of species selection in any afforestation programme. The most devastating indictment of the Forest Department's obsession with propagating eucalyptus is the species' unsuitability as fodder. Indeed, one reason eucalyptus is planted (and thrives) is that it is not browsed on by cattle and goats. Although the department has sought to shift the terms of the eucalyptus debate to the environmental plane (arguing that there is no conclusive evidence it adversely affects the ecological balance), it really has no answer to the criticism that eucalyptus is a "plant which socially speaking has all the characteristics of a weed", in so far as it benefits commercial farmers and industry, and not the rural poor hardest hit by biomass shortages.

And it is not only environmentalists who are unhappy with the Karnataka Forest Department's aggressive campaign in favour of eucalyptus. Deploring the "obsession" that industrial units (and, by extension, the Forest Department) "displays regarding eucalyptus", the State's Development Commissioner has, in a recent paper, made a forceful plea for an afforestation policy whose twin planks would be an "ecology-oriented tree cover" and a "fodder-oriented farm forestry effort". There is, needless to say, no place for eucalyptus in either strategy. Indeed, says the Commissioner, fodder species "will have to become more and more conspicuous in species selection", for " hardly any fuel species has fodder value, but all fodder species have a reasonable fuel value and some value as small timber".

Species selection is only part of the problem. Ultimately, the success or failure of afforestation efforts aimed at ecological restoration and the fulfilment of local biomass needs will be determined by the institutional framework within which they are carried out. The proposal which several activist groups have advanced turns on the formation of village or "community" forests. Revert the commons to the control of village communities, they say, and a healthy forest cover will be the result.

In reviving the arguments of early nationalists, the votaries of "village" management, are faced with formidable obstacles. For one, there is the Forest Department. Continuing to swear by the colonial system of forest management, it refuses to yield an inch of its territory to individuals and organisations sometimes better

equipped for the task of revegetating barren land. For another, there is the industrial sector. In the past, the State had supplied them raw material at throw away prices; now, emboldened by the formation of KPL, monopoly houses (including some multinationals) are unashamedly asking the Government to gift them large tracts of land for industrial forestry.

In the continuing struggle for a more ecologically conscious and socially just forest policy, the State and large industry have emerged as the environmental movements' two major opponents. Yet there is a third and equally formidable hurdle, one that is not always acknowledged. This is, in a manner of speaking, the "enemy within". Village India is in reality composed of diverse castes and classes whose interests are often sharply opposed. Historical research suggests that barely a century ago, there did exist a widespread network of village forests.

Yet in the century and a quarter since the State took over the forests, a variety of factors have worked to erode the social networks within agrarian society which enabled successful "community" management. These include the greater penetration of the market and consequently of new opportunities for commercial agriculture (and commercial forestry), the substitution of impersonal, contractual exchanges for an earlier "moral economy", growing demographic pressure (human and animal) on a shrinking resource base, and the use by the rich of the political system to advance their own ends. In the circumstances, if forests were actually to revert to "community" ownership, over large parts of the subcontinent they would be under the effective control of the more powerful members of agrarian society.

In areas where social differentiation is relatively less marked, a vigorous social movement may successfully renew the links between the village community and the forest (as in the original home of the Chipko movement, the Uttarakhand Himalayas). Elsewhere, ecological restoration and social justice are, in the present context, ends that are as often conflicting as they are complementary. The linking of afforestation with redistributive measures - for example, the granting of forest land as usufruct under "tree patta"schemes or by entrusting the management of village common lands to the landless- while by no means easy to achieve, may be the only viable strategy. Claiming (more accurately, reclaiming) the commons is only the first step; it is ensuring an equitable distribution of its produce that the SPS, and other grassroot organisations spread all over the country, will find the sternest test of all.

Ramachandra Guha,

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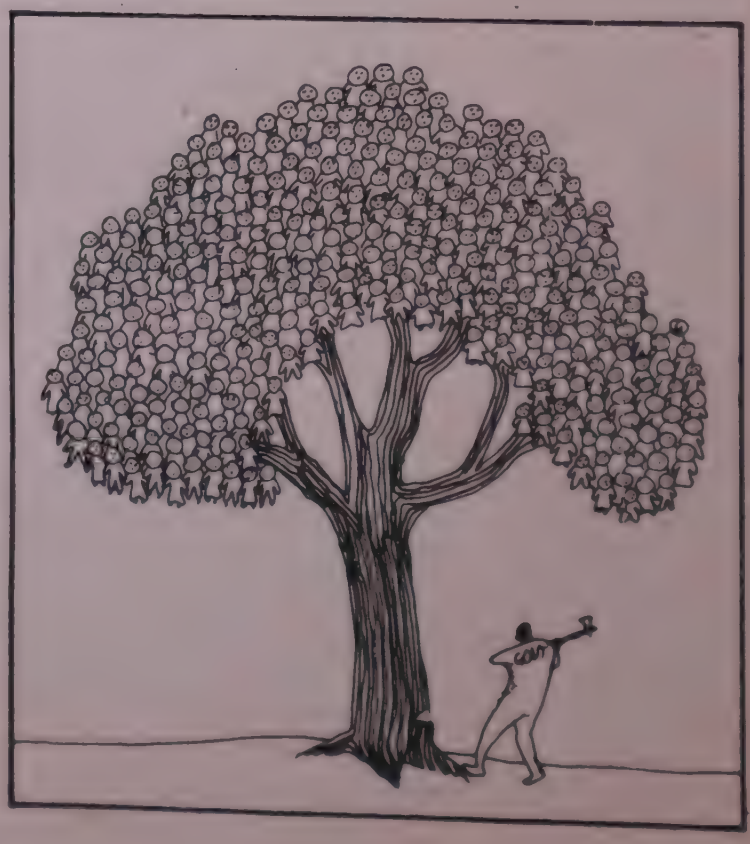

The forest department defends itself

Karnataka Pulpwood Limited is a Government company formed in partnership with Harihar Polyfibres to raise plantation of industrial species. Samaj Parivartana Samudaya has opposed the programme, including through a public litigation writ in the Supreme Court.

In two articles "Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd. strikes back" and "The corrupted system" published in *Deccan Herald* on May 5 and 6, Mr. Ajit Bhattacharjea has described Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd. as the product of corruption in Government and its Forest Department, heedless of the miseries it has caused to the people in the villages, for supporting an industry.

It is made out that the formation of Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd. (KPL) was conceived in 1984 to supplement the other benefits accorded to Harihar Polyfibres by the Government at various times. It has painted a picture of thugs of KPL objecting to and obstructing the peaceful demonstration of SPS to pull out eucalyptus seedlings and replant seedlings of fruit yielding species, a repeat performance of last November. Planting seedlings in November and April, incidentally, is symbolic of SPS. The plants are doomed to die but the planting provides good photographs. In sum the articles have praised the valiant efforts of the SPS against the machinations of a corrupt Government agency. Let us analyse the facts.

The proposal to go in for joint-sector companies was not mooted in 1984 at the instance of Harihar Polyfibres but in 1978 at the instance of the Forest Department. The suggestion made by the department which was accepted by the Government was that what is grown at the cost of society need not go to industries. Instead industries could be offered degraded areas (with tree growth of less than two tonnes per acre) to raise its own plantations. At this stage Harihar Polyfibres did not even look at the proposal as they had an agreement with the Government lasting

Environment and protest

In recent years, protest against so-called development plans and practices that harm the environment in which we live and work has developed into a world-wide movement. It has been found that such development often increases social and individual strains and widens the gulf between rich and poor.

Many massive development plans, conceived by economists who see individuals as statistical numbers, focus on raising the Gross National Product and assume that society at large will benefit. They are not concerned with the disruption of community lives and values - damage that cannot be measured quantitatively.

It was also naively assumed that the benefits would eventually "trickle down" to those who needed them most. This thesis has been exploded. In fact, in many cases, the richer sections have benefited at the cost of the poor.

(continued)

up to 2001 A.D. according to which an agreed quantity was committed to be supplied.

It was Mysore Paper Mills, a Government of Karnataka undertaking, which accepted the offer and commenced the plantation programme. The State Forest Act was amended in 1981 to empower the Government to alter the rates committed in agreements. With this amendment the rate for eucalyptus of Rs. 24 per tonne (which could have been enhanced only up to Rs. 35 per tonne till the end of the agreement period) was revised to Rs. 264 in February 1981, enhanced to Rs. 385 in April 1985, and is currently at Rs. 490. The Mysore Paper Mills is charged 50 per cent of this rate and the releases to the public are at 60 per cent of the rate charged to Harihar Polyfibers. In 1984, the Forest Act was further amended to extricate the Government of the commitment to supply the stipulated quantity with which eucalyptus from all plantations raised after 1974 were withdrawn from the purview of Harihar Polyfibres and other industrial units and reserved for release to the public.

It was at this stage that Harihar Polyfibres came forward for the joint-sector undertaking. Do the above acts of the Government give an impression of partiality to Harihar Polyfibres?

Against a commitment to supply 2,05,000 tonnes embodied in the agreement, today the supply is 70,000 tonnes. Does this smack of favouring Harihar Polyfibres or of corruption of the Government and the department? The same is happening today with the plywood industry. We have closed the working of evergreen and semi-evergreen forests from which softwood species stand committed to industrial units. The alternative afforded is the State Government's efforts to reduce the import duty on timber and offering denuded area for raising plantations. Corruption? The most corrupted mind is that which is blind to the truth.

The conditions imposed on the joint-sector company are no different from those applied to Mysore Paper Mills and these in brief are:

1. The majority share in the company and the Board of Directors shall be held by the Government. 2. The Chairman and Managing Director of the company shall be a nominee of

....Yet, it remains hard to stay the momentum of large expensive projects. Politicians, officials, contractors all prefer them because of the benefits they gain through patronage and corruption. Since the poorest elements of society are usually ignorant of their rights, they can be overlooked in spite of their numbers.

One obvious example of such projects is the diversion of land formerly available to the landless for grazing, fueldepended, to large-scale commercial forestry. This has been highlighted by the Kusnur satyagraha in this State.

On World Environment Day, this page is devoted to divergent views on the subject. The second enlarged phase of the satyagraha, designed to make the poor aware of their rights and to struggle non-violently for them, is scheduled for June 20.

-Deccan Herald ❑

the Government. 3.5% of the produce shall be from fodder species to be made available to the local population at rates prescribed by Government. 4. In lieu of lease rent 12.5% of the produce (wood) shall be made available to the Forest Department for supply to the local people (at the rates prescribed by the Government). 5. The first offer of the company's share of produce shall be made to the private sector partner viz, Harihar Polyfibres, but this shall be at a cost not less than the cost of production or the prevalent market rate whichever is higher. 6. The quantity of produce offered to the private sector partner shall be against the Government's existing commitment to supply raw materials to industries. 7. Lops, tops and bark which form up to 30 per cent while harvesting, shall be allowed to be removed by the local people as headloads free of charge. 8. The concessions of the local people shall be regulated as in the case of departmental plantations.

One of the intentions, apart from meeting the needs of the industries through new plantations, was to involve the private sector in scientific management as in some of the developed countries. Harihar Polyfibres is a pygmy with its maximum production of 60,000 tonnes of pulp per annum compared to international giants producing over 10,000,00 tonnes of pulp. Some of these companies with the application of bio-technology and genetic engineering are in a position to produce seven to ten times the yield obtained from our plantations today. Even in the case of KPL, through its private sector partner, new horizons of research have been achieved with far-reaching results available for the entire country.

Another reason, made out in 1978 and still valid today is that through afforestation, while improving the ecology, we would be making available to the local people more produce from the area than now available. It should be remembered that if the area today has tree growth of less than two tonnes, the plantantion would yield ten times more.

At this juncture, it would be necessary to understand the rationale for forming joint-sector companies to raise captive plantations.

1. All along, the users of the common resource, particularly that of forests, have never taken interest in its regeneration and restoration. This applies equally to people as well as industries. It has been a one-way affair. Removals at low or no cost. This has led to inefficient use of resources and irresponsibility on the part of the users, whether it is industry or the people. When they are made responsible to raise resources to meet their own needs at their own cost a better appreciation of costs and efforts involved will emerge leading to efficient use of the material.

2. To release the plantations raised by the State, by spending money from the public exchequer and Government efforts from the clutches of the industries and reserve the same to meet the needs of people.

3. To avail of institutional finance for forestry programmes, as in agriculture, for intensive production of wood as is done for food. It should be understood here that no forestry programme involving long gestation periods, can ever be sustained on the vagaries of annual governmental budgets. It has been our experience that most often we are not sure if after money is given for production of seedlings in the nursery this year, we will get money for planting the same next year. Further, if the area is somehow planted, there is no money assured for after-care and maintenance. With the result, departmental efforts are not perceptible. Touch and go approach has not served forestry.

4. To reclothe the lands degraded by over use, which otherwise would remain barren and deteriorate further to a point of no return.

5. To augment the supply of wood through

a plantation programme by putting together, barren land, unemployed people and institutional finance, the three factors, which remain unutilised, or underutilised.

At the time the reserve forests were constituted in the dry zone, more than three times the extent constituted as reserve forests was set aside as community privileged area for meeting the rural needs of fodder and firewood. These are now either under the plough or are totally denuded, transferring the pressures onto reserve forests. These are the reasons for India having 175 million hectares of wasteland of which 25 million hectares is in the reserve forest sector and the rest in community privileged areas and areas under marginal agriculture. It is surprising that such a hue and cry is raised when these lands are used for forestry, retaining the ownership with the State, but not a whimper, when the same piece of land is privatised through a land grant nullifying all common use.

Do we continue to maintain these degraded areas in their present condition? In which case we should not lament the annual loss suffered by the country of Rs. 10,000 crore due to floods and other ecological disasters. The areas taken up for afforestation through KPL, even according to the article by Mr. Bhattacharjea, had only a few trees of butea and grass. In another one decade, if left as such, with the mounting biotic pressure there would be neither grass nor trace of butea trees.

The cause of destruction of trees in India is neither smuggling nor industry. Smuggling from reserve forests cause economic loss but not ecological damage. The industries in India avail of barely 3 to 5 per cent of the total wood produced. It is the use of firewood as fuel which accounts for 80 to 87 per cent of the biomass produced and the cattle that are the causes of destruction. The human population has increased by 300 per cent since reservation and that of cattle by 275 per cent. Human-cattle population ratio in China is 10:1, in India it is 2:1. Does it make sense?

Can industry be the cause of destruction of forests? Sweden with 0.3 per cent of the world's land area against India's land area of 2.4 per cent produces 8 to 15 times more forest products than manufactured in our country. Sweden is still green while India has its 175 million hectares of denuded wasteland. Can industry be the cause of destruction of forests ?

Do we need paper and pulp or not? India uses paper and pulp valued at over Rs. 2,000 crore per annum. India produces part of its pulp requirement while the rest has to be imported. The very articles by Mr. Bhattacharjea were printed on paper manufactured from eucalyptus.

Now let us look at the interests of SPS in the subject. The articles have made out as though SPS is waging a battle against the Government. May we clarify that SPS itself is supported by the State and Central Governments and may be, the jatra organised by SPS is also at the cost of the Government. SPS had mentioned in the writ that over 5,00,000 people have been uprooted for accommodating KPL- God knows from where? It has been publicising repeatedly that the Supreme Court stay orders have been violated by KPL without realising that KPL is a Government company being managed by a Government agency, mostly with officials on deputation from the Forest Department. No action has been carried out in contravention of the Supreme Court orders.

A mention has been made in the articles that the Government of India's directions to cancel the lease in favour of KPL have not been complied with by the State Government. The State Government has not complied with it for the simple reason that they have not contravened the provisions of the Forest Conservation Act.

The very concept of raising plantations in degraded areas by industries through joint sector undertakings was commenced by the Prime Minister not too long back. The compliance would have meant not merely the closure of the KPL plantation programme but also that of Mysore Paper Mills, a Government company which has planted so far over three times the extent covered by KPL. These facts have been explained to the Government of India. But is it not interesting that a copy of the letter addressed to the State Government has been secured and filed by SPS in the Supreme Court in its writ against KPL in which the State Government and the Government of India are parties? Such is its influence.

There is an epic description of the thugs engaged by the company versus the common people of the villages led by SPS marchers in the article. The protection staff engaged by KPL, run as a Government company, is no different from normal departmental practices. There are one or two watchmen normally from the village, engaged for the protection of the plantation from cattle damage. If these two watchmen resisted the destruction of the plantation under their charge, facing a crowd of over 50 people, one can imagine the resistance they might have offered, and the force with which they might have struck back.

The State has more than 6.2 million hectares of denuded area of which it is expected at least 2.5 million hectares is available for afforestation. The battle being waged by SPS is against 30,000 hectares to be planted over a period of 10 years. Area so far given to and planted by KPL over the four districts of Shimoga, Chickmagalur, Dharwad and Belgaum is only 3,000 hectares, of which C & D lands are only 916 hectares.

The villagers of Kusnur have been misled by SPS that the land involved is C &D class revenue land with rights and cannot be taken away from them. This is wrong. It is a denuded reserve forest, denuded due to overuse. The Forest Department, the Zilla Parishads and the Government-owned Forest Development Corporations afforest around 40,000 hectares of such area every year.

In Kusnur itself, SPS, if interested, can do an honest job by organising tree planting with whatever species it wants, with the help of the Forest Department. We are not short of barren areas. This, however, is tedious and will also keep SPS away from its single point programme of maligning the Government and its agencies. In Kusnur and five adjacent villages, 440 hectares of plantation has been the venue of melodrama, thanks to SPS. The timing was also superb- just when the appeal petition was expected to be heard by the Supreme Court. Incidentally, the Supreme Court has since permitted an additional area of 3,000 hectares to be made available to KPL for planting, pending final disposal of the petition of SPS.

S. Shyam Sunder,
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and

S.Parameswarappa,
Chief Conservator of Forests (General).

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No attempt was made by SPS workers or villagers to pull out or plant saplings on April 29. As I reported on May 5, the visit to the place where KPL toughs abused us was to see if it was suitable "for the next, bigger satyagraha on the eve of the monsoons (the best time for planting)".

Not only did the KPL toughs misbehave then, I described how they later stopped our taxi and threatened personal violence until we were rescued by local villagers. But the officials do not deign to notice inconvenient incidents.

Presumably, the SPS will reply to some of the other mis-statements.

Ajit Bhattacharjea

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An Anti-people afforestation policy

Social forestry programmes have been launched by several States to promote afforestation on essentially non-forest lands, that is, on private farms and on village commons.

Several State Governments have stepped up their own afforestation efforts and are also planning (in most cases, without much public discussion) to hand over large tracts of degraded Government forest lands to industrial firms for afforestation. All these programmes have one thing in common: the planting of trees to meet the needs of urban and industrial markets while the glaring fuel and fodder crises facing the common person continue to grow. The species chosen- like eucalyptus, teak and pine- also do little for ecological restoration, for enhancing soil fertility or for soil and water conservation.

The very same process of commercialising the forest resources base that has led to widespread deforestation in the country, is today the motive force behind the Government's afforestation programmes being carried out with the full support of foreign aid agencies. India's afforestation is, thus, as anti-people as is its deforestation. Rural women, for instance, whose lives revolve around the collection of fuel and fodder, have almost nowhere been involved in these programmes. People are responding with greater alacrity to voluntary afforestation efforts aimed primarily at meeting people's needs of fuel, fodder and small timber- and popular protests grow against both Government-sponsored deforestation and afforestation. For instance in Karnataka, while the Appiko movement is mobilising people to hug trees from being cut, the State's powerful Ryot Sangha (Farmers' Association) threatens to uproot millions of eucalyptus seedlings already planted. Few in the Government have the imagination to realise that afforestation of India's degraded public lands could form the core of India's largest land reforms, anti-poverty and employment generation programmes...Social forestry is a term used by the National Commission on Agriculture in 1976 to denote tree-raising programmes to supply firewood, fodder, small timber and minor forest produce to rural populations. Nearly a decade later, it is emerging as the most controversial initiative of the Indian Government.

"I have seen many programmes launched in the name of the poor but soon distorted to benefit the upper classes. But no programme has been diverted further away from its objective than social forestry," Mr. T.L.Sankar, former Member-Secretary of the Planning Commission's Working Group on Energy Policy, told a meeting on cooking energy held in New Delhi. "The Forest Departments never seem to ask the question: wood production for whom or for what?" Critics of the programme strongly contend that the wood produced from social forestry programmes is ending up in urban and industrial India instead of with the poor in rural India, reducing rural employment and land under food production, and promoting absentee landlordism...Ambitious social forestry programmes have already been launched by several State Governments, most of which have been financed by foreign aid agencies like the World Bank , US Agency for International Development (USAID), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). Forest Departments in most States have set up separate social forestry wings...

Despite these achievements, present and projected, doubts and criticism about the actual

benefits of social forestry have grown into a shrill chorus. These were first sparked off by a study in Kolar district in Karnataka which showed that it was nothing but a masquerade for tree farming, encouraged and supported by pulp and rayon mills hungry for pulpwood. And as a result of which extensive food growing lands were being replaced by eucalyptus plantations.Social forestry programmes have mainly three components: farm forestry, encouraging farmers to plant trees on their own farms by distributing free or subsidised seedlings; woodlots planted by the Forest Departments for the need of the community, especially along roadsides, canal banks and other such public lands; and community woodlots planted by the communities themselves on community lands, to be shared equally by them.

Judging by the World Bank's own mid-term reviews of social forestry projects in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat, big farmers are emerging as the primary beneficiaries. In Uttar Pradesh, the World Bank-assisted social forestry programme overshot its farm forestry target by 3,430 per cent, a phenomenal and unprecedented degree of success for a Government programme. However, efforts in the creation of the community self-help woodlots achieved only 11 per cent of the target, a disastrous record even though this component of social forestry programmes is aimed most at meeting the needs of the neediest in rural communities, the landless and small and marginal farmers. In Gujarat too, farm forestry targets were exceeded by more than 200 per cent whereas community self-help woodlots met only 43 per cent of the target...

A major reason for the distortions in social forestry programmes is the acute shortage of building poles in the urban market and of pulpwood, required by the rayon and paper industries. The active propagation of farm forestry by the Government and the financial incentives it holds out has come as a windfall for the big farmer. Labour needs go down when farmers switch from short-term agriculture to long-term tree farming and they can even contemplate becoming absentee landlords. If they plant a tree like eucalyptus which is not palatable to animals, supervisory problems are also reduced.

From: *India's Environment 1984-85*
By the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi.

Environmental pressures increase poverty

India's poverty is closely connected with its increasing land degradation. Out of 329 million hectares of land mass as much as 175 million hectares is considered degraded in one form or the other.

What is even more alarming is the rate at which land degradation is taking place. Satellite imagery has indicated that we are losing forest cover at the rate of 1.5 million hectares a year. Further, with bad agriculture and irrigation practices, bad road building in fragile hills, bad mining practices, wind and water erosion, water logging, urbanisation and industrialisation, possibly another 1 million hectares a year is going out of productive use.

In a country with a population of 760 million, the per capita land has declined from 0.9 hectares in 1951 to 0.5 hectares in 1981. And cultivable land has declined from 0.48 hectares per capita in 1951 to 0.26 hectares in 1981.

The pressure on land is enormous. Marginal lands are being used for subsistence agriculture leading to further land degradation. With a livestock population of over 400 million, grazing and common lands are overused to the extent that there is hardly any productivity left in them. With half the forest cover gone, there are acute shortages of fuelwood and fodder. Illegal felling in reserved forests and illegal occupation of revenue community lands has become widespread, destroying the common use of common lands and the related social fabric.

With deforestation, especially in the upper catchment areas, soil erosion has increased very considerably. Soil erosion was estimated to be 6,000 million tonnes in 1972. It is now estimated at 12,000 million tonnes. According to the Department of Agriculture, the country is losing 30 million to 50 million tonnes of foodgrains on account of loss of top soil. With deforestation, undergound water tables have been going down even where rainfall has been ample because of run-offs, leaving a large number of ponds and shallow wells dry, affecting agricultural productivity, especially of the smaller farmers. Floods and droughts too have increased in frequency, severity and extent leading to enormous losses, human suffering and increased poverty in rural areas.

The Government spends crores of rupees on drought and flood relief, diverting scarce resources for unproductive disaster relief. In 1985-86, drought and flood relief assistance, from the Centre alone was Rs. 997.14 crore. In 1987-88, the Government spent over Rs. 2,000 crore for drought relief. In spite of this assistance, the loss of animal wealth and human suffering has been immense. Drought and floods are a mute reminder of the neglect of land use and inappropriate forest policies, and the need to take a holistic view of land use and its productivity for the welfare of the people and the elimination of poverty.

The articles in the section Sunday Spotlight of the *Deccan Herald* (Dated 5-6-1988) provoked many persons to join the issue. So in continuation of the theme the Deccan Herald published the following three articles in their Sunday magazine section on 19-6-1988. We reproduce them in full to highlight the issues involved in the controversy.

-Publishers

The country has paid a heavy price for its neglect of land use policies, especially those relating to the uncultivated half of India. Land policy is fairly well defined for the 143 million hectares of private agriculture land. There is a policy framework built on decades of experience and analysis and a huge basis of expertise. With time and experience, policy combinations were evolved to increase productivity at successive levels of difficulty.

The same cannot be said of the uncultivated half of India forest lands, grazing lands, community and revenue lands, almost all used as common resources by the poor and almost all fast becoming wastelands. Different administrative jurisdictions of common lands have resulted in custodial approaches to land use policies and land management irrespective of their best use. Custodial jurisdictions dictate policy rather than the promotion of the highest contribution of such land resources to social welfare, present and future.

If poverty in the country is to be seriously tackled, then environmental issues such as deforestation, utilisation of degraded and wasted lands, soil erosion, pollution, use of common lands, fuelwood and fodder development need to receive the highest political attention. In the 40 years of development planning since Independence, every Five Year Plan has focussed on the elimination of poverty. Yet, 40 years later, we find half our population still below the poverty line. In absoluto numbers about the same as when we started the journey towards development after Independence.

Development thinking must take into account the inter-relationship of poverty, resources and people. The poor are caught in a vicious downward spiral. They are forced to overuse resources to survive; the impoverishment of the environment further impoverishes them making survival more difficult and uncertain. The challenge of development lies in understanding the mutual link between poverty and environment. In development, there is also the challenge of empowering local people in relation to local resources and their equitable distribution in the context of extreme scarcity and survival. Development must be socially and environmentally sustainable.

In the pursuit of food security, large dams and irrigation projects were supported not fully realising the cost of environmental degradation and the uprooting of people. Substantial forest areas were submerged and a large number of people made "Oustees" during their implementation. The life of the dams and reservoirs too proved to be less than half of what was planned because of the heavy siltation from the upper regions. The cost of irrigating one hectare of land has been very much higher than the original estimate.

Similarly, the recent approval by the Government of the Narmada dam has been justified in terms of development needs, electricity, irrigation potential and agricultural productivity. It is estimated that the Narmada dam means 10,000,00 people - some say 30,000,00 -will be uprooted and become destitutes; and 35,000 hectares of prime forest land will be submerged. The "Oustees" will tell you what it is to live with the threat of being wiped out, of having their way of life, culture and identity literally drowned. They have had to pay for such development with a degradation both deeper and more lasting.

The rape of the Himalayas has also been in the name of development. Earlier, the colonial rulers deforested the Himalayas for their own needs. But since then development needs such as sleepers for the Railways, wood for the paper and pulp industry and sports goods continued the deforestation and devastation. The consequent soil erosion and run-offs, the acute short-

ages of fuelwood and fodder for the local people, the declining agriculture, the resultant male migration, the deepening poverty and ecological damage are all related to the concept of development which ignores environment and the needs and lifestyles of local people.

The Chipko Movement was, in effect, an uprising of the local women in Uttarkhand, a protest against Government policies of development and against the diversion of natural resources for urban and commercial purposes. The deforestation in the Himalayas also resulted in floods in the Alaknanda river and tributaries devastating their villages and threatening their lives year after year. Many critical survival issues are related to such development policies. Serious questions are being raised about such development policies which ignore not only environmental concerns but also rural communities living in harmony with their environment.

A militancy is growing amongst the tribals and others affected by such exploitative development projects. Activists are emerging in the environment movement questioning such development projects. Development, they argue, must be indigenous, matched to actual local needs though the large projects have the illusion of success, power and modernisation. Besides, they claim, there are better, cheaper and decentralised options.

Although 80 per cent of India's population lives in rural areas and more than half of them are below the poverty line, the bias in terms of development, investment, education and training, infrastucture development, and Institutional support systems have all been largely biased in support of urban needs and urbanised development. It is the biased structure of rewards and opportunities which forces young men of energy and ability from rural backgrounds to migrate to cities to seek employment. It is precisely this kind of development which Gandhi tried to prevent with his emphasis on the rural poor and decentralisation.

Ultimately, development is not merely economics, technology or social issues, but a moral force which does not accept poverty, the widening disparities between the rich and poor and the over exploitation of natural resources. People's participation requires a concern for the people, people-centred policies and people-centred institutions. Bureaucratic structures have not been too successful in reaching the poor. In the Fifties, Jawaharlal Nehru introduced the Community Development Programme for integrated rural development to enhance the economic base and improve the quality of life in rural areas. The programme was, however, given up after Nehru's death, partly because of its lack of success, and partly because of a trend towards centralisation of power with its top down approach.

The Seventies too saw an emphasis on anti-poverty programmes to reduce rural poverty. Institutions such as the Small Farmers' Development Agency, Marginal Farmer's Development Agency, the Tribal Development Agency, the District Rural Development Agency, the Desert Development Agency, the Drought Prone Area Programme and Regional Rural Banks were established to assist in the development of small and marginal farmers, the landless, tribals, Scheduled Castes and Tribes. These Institutions, like the Community Development Programme earlier, increased the numbers of lower levels of bureaucracy immensely, but the delivery of services, extension and assistance did not take place. The failure is attributed to many factors such as technocratic approach, bureaucratic inflexibility, organisational weaknesses and faulty delivery system.

At the core of such bureaucratic institutional mechanisms, meant for the rural poor, lies the lack of people's involvement and participation,

and systems that frighten away people from Government offices. The very bureaucracy hired to service these programmes drained development funds from those who were too weak to protest.

The Social Forestry Programme initiated largely in the Sixth Plan, meant to enhance fuelwood, fodder and small timber for the rural poor, also shows that the schemes have, in fact, largely benefited the bigger farmers and the paper, pulp and construction industries by passing the rural poor. Large centralised nurseries for raising saplings were established and the Government agreed to free distribution of saplings to encourage and benefit the rural poor. However, the bigger farmers collected the saplings in their trucks and tractors. The smaller farmers could not benefit because of the distance and the lack of facilities for carrying saplings. The selection of species too were not on the basis of what the poor needed, but for a commercial market.

The system of consultation or involvement of the beneficiaries in decision making is generally not part of the bureaucratic orientation. Although many of the anti-poverty schemes, as well as the social forestry schemes, have a beneficiary orientation, the beneficiary perspective, that is, the scheme seen from the point of view of the beneficiary, the rural poor, is missing. The reality as experienced by the poor living on the margin of existence is often different from assumptions made by the administrator.

Popular participation in anti-poverty schemes is more easily said than achieved in reality. Schemes are formulated by the Centre or State Ministries, targets announced and implemented through conventional bureaucratic structures unable to be responsive to local needs and preferences. The bureaucratic system by its very logic and goals becomes target-oriented subordinating local needs to a blueprint approach or guidelines determined from the top.

The Government too is beginning to realise that the involvement and participation of rural people is essential and that bureaucratic structures are perhaps not the most appropriate in implementing the various anti-poverty schemes.India has thousands of voluntary agencies, large and small, doing constructive work in remote and backward areas close to the rural poor. The largest number are Gandhian agencies. Gandhi inspired thousands of people to serve India by undertaking constructive work in the most remote and backward areas. Constructive work, according to Gandhi, was working for communal harmony, removal of untouchability, basic and adult education, village sanitation and health, khadi and village industries, economic equality and women's equality. The aim of constructive work was to build local people and local institutions for self-sufficiency.

Besides the thousands of Gandhian voluntary agencies spread all over the country, there are two other streams that have contributed to voluntary action. The first are the Christian missionaries who came in large numbers during the British Raj. Their contribution was in education, health and hospitals. Their numbers have decreased considerably after Independence. The second major stream that organised voluntary action was the Ramakrishna Mission inspired by Swami Vivekananda. The Ramakrishna Mission, spread all over the country, has contributed significantly in education, health and culture.

More recently in the last decade or so, young scientists and professionals have moved into development work, working as "intermediaries" between the Government and the people. These scientists have worked on and introduced improved smokeless stoves, solar energy for irrigation and lighting, improved agricultural implements and better hand-pumps.

However, the most significant emergence of young professionals in voluntary action in

recent years has been in relation to environmental issues. Environmental problems in India are closely linked with poverty and women's issues. These voluntary agencies have often confronted the Government in order to protect the poor and the environment. In Karnataka, a number of voluntary agencies have challenged the State Government for leasing C & D degraded lands, used by local communities for grazing, to industry. The mining in the Mussorie hills which devastated the hillside affecting the health of local communities, endangering their villages and water supply, was taken up by environmental groups and a stay order obtained from the Supreme Court.

The agitation by local groups in Kerala to save the Silent Valley from "development" is another such example. In a recent march organised by voluntary agencies to focus attention on the rehabilitation of the Western Ghats, some 350 voluntary groups took part. There are protests organised by many voluntary agencies against the Narmada and Tehri dam projects approved recently by the Government, which threaten to uproot millions of people and submerge thousands of hectares of prime forests.

Because of the nexus between poverty and environment and its manifold manifestations such as floods, droughts, famine and hunger, unemployment, unrest and civil rights, women's rights and drudgery, the disappearance of flora, fauna and grazing lands, there is a convergence of interests, of different types of voluntary agencies coming together. The convergence has produced co-operation and synergism in dealing with these issues. The environment movement, with its other face as poverty, has been a great unifying force among the different agencies involved in voluntary action.

In many situations, Government policies themselves are a barrier to people's participation and development. For instance, the Forest Conservation Act (1980) is meant for stopping diversion of forest land for non-forest purpose. But guidelines from the Centre prevent people's agencies such as voluntary agencies and co-operatives from afforestation activities in degraded forest areas. There is custodial approach to the management of forest lands irrespective of the welfare of the people. In such a situation, only voluntary agencies can act effectively in the fight for change. **Kamala Chowdhry**

The role SPS plays in promoting afforestation

"Who benefits from common lands or forestry and who pays the price?" are the vital questions totally missed in the article by two senior Forest Department officials entitled "The Forest Department defends itself" (DH - June 5).

We, of the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS), Dharwad, and Guddanadu Abhivruddhi Samiti, Kusnur, would like to comment on some of the important points raised in the article.

The concerned officials do not seem to understand the activities of the SPS and its role in the issue of the acquisition of common lands, with special reference to Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd; (KPL). This is especially apparent from comments like "In Kusnur itself, SPS, if interested, can do an honest job by organising tree planting with whatever species it wants." Even while the article by the officials was reaching readers, the SPS, in co-operation with local organisations and the involvement of Mandal Panchayat members, was planting fodder, fruit and other useful trees in Janamattitanda (2 km from Kusnur), Kerekyatanhalli, Kusnur and Kanneshwar, including near the school building. Early in April, the Zilla Parishad of Dharwad requested the District Forest Department officials to help the villagers and the SPS in estimating the costs for part of the Hirebasur common lands to be supported by NREP and RLEGP.

SPS activists are most closely associated with grassroots work, with decentralised nurseries and tree planting as a central activity. In the last 3-4 years, one of the members of the SPS committee, with the initiative of one of the authors of the said article, started involving the poor in Ranibennur taluka in these activities. The result: an excellent 32-hectare fodder plot near Airani village on Government land created by active partnership of the Forest Department and the local villagers with the catalytic role of voluntary agencies in the area and over 1 million seedlings of species useful to the poorest villagers in terms of fodder, fruits and fuel.

In fact, it is the SPS which has helped over 20 voluntary agencies and the Forest Department to work together to raise millions of saplings in decentralised nurseries for the poorest of the poor. This included solving snags with the help of Government officials, especially the Rural Development Department. These voluntary agencies are part of the Federation of Voluntary Organisations for Rural Development in Karnataka (FEVORD-K) whose work has received the acclaim and support of senior government officials.

The SPS has played a central role in the work of FEVORD-K, especially in wasteland development and social forestry and has helped to form district committees for this purpose. In fact, the SPS has been invited to a meeting under the chairmanship of the Development Commissioner on June 24, 1988 for setting up a major pilot project in selected Mandal Panchayats in Dharwad district, involving thousands of hectares of wasteland development for people's needs.

Another major activity of the SPS is to help the people affected by pollution of the Tungabhadra river as well as air and soil pollution caused by two Birla industries at Kumarapatnam near Harihar. Recognising the scientific and systematic approach of the SPS, both the Central and State Governments have helped in many ways, including financially, to make a scientific study of this pollution and contributed Rs. 15,000 to file a public interest litigation in the High Court of Karnataka.

However, returning to the common lands issue, it needs to be pointed out, as Mr. Ajit Bhattacharjea did, that all of the common lands of Kusnur and several other villages have been taken over by KPL, driving the people of these villages, especially the poor, to the wall. The best example of the exploitation, given in Mr. Bhattacharjea's articles, was the beneficiary of a Government anti-poverty programme who was given a loan for sheep but had no land to graze them, thanks to KPL. Moreover, his 14 sheep were rounded up and the villager harassed. Finally when many villagers protested, 13 of the 14 sheep were returned. This example is one of the reasons why the SPS got involved in this issue.

The other activities of the SPS include working for an Employment Guarantee Scheme in Karnataka which will help the rural poor get the work they badly need and which can help create assets, like afforestation on wastelands of the species they need most: fodder, fuel, raw material for artisans, green leaves for manure and small timber for housing and agricultural implements. Well over 5,00,000 rural people, especially the poor in the four districts of Shimoga, Dharwad, Belgaum and Chikmagalur, are being or are to be deprived of their common lands as in Kusnur because of the Government agreement signed with Harihar Polyfibres in November 1984 forming KPL. This involved 30,000 hectares, all in the high rainfall areas of Malnad.

The authors of the said article also try to deny the fact of corruption in the system and tend to blame others for deforestation and lack of revegetation. They have conveniently avoided the major scandal in 1982 regarding the rates of raw material to industries. This resulted in a loss of Rs. 22 crore to the public exchequer. As India Today reported on July 31, 1982 "Karnatata Chief Minister Gundu Rao was indicted by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the State Legislature of showing favouritism to private industry while revising the forest rates, resulting in an enormous loss of Rs. 22 crore to the exchequer"

The authors claim that "KPL is a Government company managed by a Government agency mostly with officials on deputation from the Forest Department . . .No action has been carried out in contravention of the Supreme Court orders". They ignore the following facts:

The Supreme Court granted a stay order on March 24, 1987 instructing that status quo regarding the possession of land be maintained. But the operations of KPL in terms of developing their nurseries and planting of eucalyptus saplings have gone on unchecked. What is still more serious is that besides the land handed over to KPL through the lease agreement dated July 15, 1986, KPL's Joint Managing Director (representing Harihar Polyfibres) wrote to the Forest Department on August 25, 1987 to release about 7,000 hectares of land to them which they themselves had identified as degraded. And almost immediately on September 2, 1987 the Chief Conservator of Forests (General) wrote letters to Forest Conservators in Shimoga, Dharwad and Belgaum asking them to inspect and transfer these lands and to report on the action taken in this regard. This was a clear violation of the Supreme Court stay orders.

KPL has already started bulldozing and trench digging in Uppunashi village in Hangal taluka of Dharwad district, much to the surprise of local people who know that officially this land has not been transferred to KPL. We also have reliable information that the local forest officials of Dharwad have written to the Chief Conservator of Forests saying that most of the land identified by KPL is not really degraded and, therefore, cannot be handed over to KPL.

In brief, KPL is a private corporation which is being favoured at an enormous cost to millions of poor people. As Gandhiji said, " Real Swarajya will not come by the acquisition of power by the few but by the capacity of many to resist when the power is misused."

The affected people must play the central role and voluntary organisations like the SPS a supporting role in building peoples' power through conducting environment camps, helping people and officials to come closer to each other, organising scientific studies, exploring legal methods to redress injustice and finally conducting training programmes for non-violent direct action (satyagraha) by the affected people.

S.R.Hiremath, et al.

(Action Committee for Protection of Common Lands)

KPL facing inquiry

ARTICLES on the functioning of Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL) and the impact of commercial forestry in general on rural economy, especially on the livelihood of the local poor, that appeared in Sunday Spotlight two weeks ago have been followed by major developments.

The State Government has decided to appoint Dr. Madhav Gadgil of the Indian Institute of Science who wrote on "Greening the Commons in Karnataka" last week, as a one-man committee to inquire into the controversy. Until his report is received, KPL operations in Dharwad district, where a non-violent struggle has been conducted against them, are to be suspended. In response, the mass satyagraha planned for tomorrow in Kusnur village has been suspended.

Meanwhile, the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS) has replied to the complaints against it in the article by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Shyam Sunder and a colleague, Ramachandra Guha of the Indian Institute of Science has responded to the case made for commercial forestry.

Kamla Chowdhry, who resigned from the newly created office of Chairperson of the National Wastelands Development Board in protest against governmental and bureaucratic non-co-operation, contributes a comprehensive article on the impact of land degradation and ill-conceived development plans on the poor.

Deccan Herald, 19-6-88

Commercial forestry : defending the indefensible

In their defence of the Government's involvement in Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (DH-June 5), Mr.Shyam Sunder and Mr. Parameswarappa of the Forest Department make the following claims:

1. The Government is not, and never has been, partial to industry in respect of forest management;

2. It is the poor peasant, rather than industry, who destroys the forest;

3. The land offered to industry was "degraded", with tree-growth of less than 2 tonnes per hectare, and the private companies "with the application of biotechnology and genetic engineering" will greatly enhance the yield.

Let us examine these claims one by one.

The first claim runs counter to all the accumulated evidence on the industrial orientation of the Government's forest policy. In the course of my research on forest management, I have read hundreds of forest working plans, the documents that lay down the guidelines for the management of different forest divisions. I have yet to come across one working plan whose prescriptions were geared to fulfilling rural biomass needs; on the contrary, the emphasis of almost all such plans has been on augmenting the output of commercially useful species.

This bias in favour of the commercial-industrial sector is strikingly evident in the very language of "scientific" forestry wherein villagers living in and around reserved forests are classified among the "enemies to the forest". Working plans make a sharp distinction between "valuable" (a euphemism for commercially profitable) and "inferior" species. Whereas these plans prescribe the elimination of the latter and the propagation of the former, it is hardly a coincidence that the so-called "inferior" species are precisely those that supply fuel, fodder and small timber and are thus of most use to the village economy.

Since 1947, the industrial orientation of forest policy has passed through three distinct stages. In the first stage, the Forest Department relied on the existing "selection" system to harvest commercial species. Simultaneously, large industry was supplied raw material at highly subsidised rates. For example, West Coast Paper Mills was supplied bamboo at Re. 1 per tonne when the market rate was Rs. 500 per tonne. When these methods failed to meet the growing industrial demand, a second stage commenced, in which large tracts of natural forest were clear-felled and planted over with monocultures of exotic species (chiefly eucalyptus and tropical pine). The failure of plantation forestry (in Karnataka the actual yields were between 14 percent and 43 per cent of anticipated yields) forced industry to partly abandon the Forest Department and look elsewhere.

In the third stage (whose ramifications have been the object of an intense debate in this State), it encouraged private farmers to plant eucalyptus, offering them advances which hypothecated the tree crop to them. However, the eucalyptus epidemic on farmland has also relied heavily on Government subsidies. Thus farmers have been supplied free seedlings, technical help and soft loans, all under a most inappropriately named "social forestry" programme which benefits only industry and commercial farmers, while the rural poor, worst hit by biomass shortages, are left out in the cold.

If in these successive stages large industry has emerged as the prime beneficiary of the Government's forest policy, the KPL project

marks the advent of a fourth stage. Not satisfied with all the concessions it has received so far (and which have exacted a heavy environmental and social cost), industry now wants to grab land to grow its own raw material. Hence the takeover of village common lands (the so-called C and D class lands) by KPL and its ilk.

How about the claim that the rural poor destroy the forest? Actually, it is industrial forestry whose ecological costs have been devastating. For example, over large areas of the Western Ghats, excellent rain forests were clear-felled and planted with eucalyptus. These plantations were attacked and wiped out by a fungal disease known as pink disease (it is well-known that monoculture plantations are especially prone to such attacks). In effect, rich tropical rain forests were converted into man-made deserts.

Even in natural forests under the selection system, regeneration rates have been very poor, and "sustained yield" has been honoured more in the breach. The contract system under which trees are auctioned to the highest bidder is legendary for its corruption - contractors bid much higher than the actual value of the coupe, confident that they can fell many more trees than those actually marked for felling.

The fact that in the aggregate fuelwood demands are in excess of commercial demand does not exonerate industry of its role in forest destruction (nor does the more recent, and partial, abandonment of clearfelling and the auction system, which in any case are an outcome of the environmental movement and not changes which came from within). Many studies show that rural fuelwood demand is met through the collection of twigs and branches. It is industrial exploitation and the increasing urban fuelwood demand which introduce the modifications in working plans - felling of large trees, the conversion of mixed forests into single species stands that are a serious impediment to the regeneration and maintenance of the forest ecosystem.

Even where rural fuelwood collection and grazing are inhibiting regeneration, two important points must be noted: (i) in instances where the rural poor are destroying the forest, they are

forced to do so in order to survive, whereas industry destroys forests for profit; (ii) the poor know from bitter experience that if they do not utilise a particular forest, before long it will be completely felled and the logs transported for industrial and urban use. From long experience villages have completely lost faith in the State machinery, which has consistently denied them their longstanding claims on forest land and its produce. This is so as far as reserved forests are concerned; the grabbing of village common lands by KPL shows that their fears have been more than justified.

As for the claim that only degraded lands are being taken over by KPL, there is both documentary and photographic evidence that many of these lands were not degraded but had substantial tree cover. In any case, the figure of 2 tonnes per hectare is a wholly arbitrary one - a hectare of mixed tree and shrub growth whose annual biomass production is less than 2 tonnes but which provides fuel, fodder, medicines and material for village artisans, is of far more value to rural communities than a monocultural plantation of eucalyptus, whose "productivity" may be higher when measured by the narrow criteria of aggregate biomass output. We must also take claims of increased productivity with a bucketful of salt for we have before us the experience of clear-felling when the same claims were made and falsified very quickly.

While independent studies by historians, anthropologists and ecologists confirm that in its century and a quarter of existence the Forest Department has tended to favour the commercial-industrial sector (no doubt on instructions from above), the apportioning of blame cannot be an end in itself. The only realistic hope of stemming the tide of deforestation lies in a complete overhaul of the existing system of forest administration, so that the biomass shortages in rural areas, far more pressing and tied to the survival and subsistence of hundreds of millions of poor people, are given precedence over the profit motive of large industry.

In this the initiative has ultimately to come from the politicians. For example, instead of floating a joint sector company with the largest monopoly house, why does not the State Government float joint sector companies with the participation of the rural poor and meet their more pressing biomass requirements? However, any such reorientation will undoubtedly require a sea change in the attitudes, policies and programmes of the Forest Department itself. Are they prepared for it? On retirement, many forest officers take up jobs with paper and rayon companies. In the changed circumstances, will at least a handful come forward and work with the voluntary groups struggling with slender financial and institutional resources to regreen our bare lands?

As for the day to day functioning of the department, Mr. Shyamsunder and Mr. Parameswarappa must realise the futility of defending a system of forest management whose *raison d'etre* is the exclusion of villagers from the management and benefits of forest working. In an independent, democratic and ostensibly "socialist" India, there is no place for an anachronistic system, a carryover from colonialism in which foresters (in the manner of policemen) place themselves in perpetual opposition to the overwhelming majority of our population - the pastoralists, artisans, landless and small peasants, women and tribals, whose critical dependence on biomass resources calls for more urgent attention than the avarice of industry.

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Deccan Herald, June 19, 1988.

Forest cover and government cover-up

Early this year, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests disclosed the results of an apparent official cover-up exercise of what was euphemistically termed as a "reconciliation exercise" on the question of how much of the country was under forest cover.

The National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA) came out with an alarming revelation that the forest cover in the country had shrunk from 16.89 percent (of the total geographical area) during 1972-75 to 14.10 percent during 1980-82. The NRSA mapped the forest cover through visual interpretation of satellite imagery. The Forest Survey of India (FSI), too, carried out a similar study for 1980-83 and concluded that the extent of forest cover was 19.7 percent and not 14.10 percent as worked out by the NRSA. In the face of increasing environmental awareness on issues of deforestation and also due to the wide discrepancy in the two figures, a joint reconciliation exercise was undertaken by the two organisations last year and the 'compromise' figure arrived at was 19.52 per cent.

Statistics questioned

Environmentalists were quick to ask the question. How could India's forest cover increase from 46.35 million hectares to 64.20 million hectares overnight? How did the Forest Department manage to produce the extra 17.85 million hectares that the eye-in-the-sky satellite had missed?

The mystery has been unravelled by Chairman of the advisory board on energy to the Prime Minister's Secretariat B.B.Vohra. "What has happened is that 17.6 million hectares of land which the NRSA had interpreted as possessing less than 10 percent crown cover and had, therefore, ignored as not fit to be classified as forests at all, were discovered, during the reconciliation exercise, to possess a minimum of 10 percent crown cover. The statistical and retrospective addition to our forest wealth which has taken place is, therefore, on account of the inclusion of

Common Property Resources and Rural Poor in Dry Regions of India

Common Property Resources (CPRs); though neglected by policy makers and planners, play a significant role in the life of the rural poor. This paper, part of a larger study on the role of CPRs in farming systems of dry areas of India, attempts to quantify the extent to which the rural poor benefit from CPRs. Based on data from over 80 villages in 21 districts in dry regions of seven states, the study reveals significant contribution of CPRs towards the employment and income generation for the rural poor, i.e. labour and small farm households. The per house hold per year income derived from CPRs ranged between Rs. 530 and Rs. 830 in different areas. This is higher than the income generated by a number of anti-poverty programmes in some areas. The dependence of richer households on CPRs is much less.

(continued)

marginal forest areas within the definition of "open" forests. Since the NRSA's estimates of "closed" forests have been found to be correct by the FSI, it is clear that we lost 10.65 million hectares of such forests during the interval between the two sets of imageries", he said.

The FSI assessment of forest cover in Karnataka during 1981-83 was 16.82 per cent, 32,264 sq. km. in terms of area. Given the experience of official eagerness to sweep under the carpet the extent of denudation, hard-boiled environmentalists in Karnataka tend to put the figure around 12 per cent, pointing to the gargantuan requirements of paper and pulp industries using forest-based raw materials.

Shrinking forests

The badly-denuded forest regions come under Shimoga and Chickmagalur districts and partly under Dharwad District where the shrinking forest cover has been attributed to the propensity of plywood units and a private sector paper mill. The 17 plywood, two chipboard, two match and two packing case manufacturing industries in the State together extract approximately 1.5 lakh cubic metres of softwood every year from evergreen trees.

The Forest Department authorities attribute the deforestation chiefly to the insatiable fuel needs of the population. The firewood deficit in the State comes to around 4 million tonnes a year and the deficit is expected to increase to 8 million tonnes by 1990. With the wholesale destruction of areas set aside for meeting the firewood needs of rural population, pressure to meet this need got shifted to reserve forests. Excessive grazing by cattle and forest fires and the shifting cultivation practised earlier are also factors listed by them as causing deforestation.

Simplistic argument

But one major cause for the destruction of forests, underplayed if not completely glossed over by the authorities, is the inexorable drive of industrial growth and commercial dynamics exerting pressure on the forests in their appetite for raw materials. Environmentalists point to the destruction process set into motion by the British regime right from the Himalayan forests to the Vindhya ranges and the Western Ghats to feed the railway industry. The exploitation of the forests and its commercialisation has not undergone any perceptible change in free India, either. It was only in the last decade, that growing tribal

Despite such contributions of CPRs, their area and productivity are declining in all the regions. The area of CPRs has declined by 26 to 63 per cent during last three decades. Large-scale privatisation of CPRs has taken place mainly during the last three decades. The privatisation of CPRs was done largely to help the poor. However, 49-86 per cent of the privatised CPRs ended up in the hands of the non-poor in different areas. Further more, most of the land received by the poor households was also given up by them as they did not have complementary resources to develop and use the newly received lands. Thus, the rural poor collectively lost a significant part of the source of their sustenance through the decline of CPRs. This loss does not seem to be compensated by privatised CPR lands given to (or retained by) them. The situation calls for greater attention to CPRs as a part of the anti-poverty strategy.

N. S. Jodha

Courtesy: *Economic & Political Weekly*, July 5, 1986

unrest and protests by the populations uprooted from the forests together with concerted though scattered ecological movements, managed to put some checks on the wanton destruction of forests, the natural endowments, essential for human survival.

The Forest Department's argument that increased population, the cause of the present crisis, on the face appears to be a simplistic and unfounded one. A technical report on farm and community forestry observes: "Fuelwood gathering has sometimes been cast as the major culprit in tree depletion. In practice, this is rarely the case; other and more destructive forces are usually at work as well. In most places it is only in areas of concentrated demand, where there is also a commercial incentive to cut trees, that fuel-wood collection is the dominant factor in the destruction of wood resources. Most often, the break-down of the traditional equilibrium is a result of a combination of factors".

Villagers' complain

It is in the above context of the unholy alliance of forest authorities and the industrial lobby, that the controversy on the propagation of eucalyptus in Karnataka under the World Bank-aided Social Forestry Scheme by the zealous Forest Department attracted unprecedented flak in recent years. Scores of environmental groups and social orgnisations have been engaged in battle with the foresters on the indiscriminate propagation of eucalyptus to satisfy the hunger of man-made fibre industry, at the cost of ecological degradation and replacement of staple food crops like ragi consumed by the rural poor.

Though the primary and secondary objectives of the Rs. 55 crore World Bank - aided social forestry project in Karnataka was to increase fuelwood supplies to rural and semi-urban population besides the small timber, livestock fodder and bamboo requirements of agrarian populations, the environmental groups as well as the villagers complain that the project consists of extensive, near-exclusive cultivation of eucalyptus and fast growing tree species where they are environmentally and socially inappropriate. Despite its goals, they contend that the project is converting ecosystems, which provide biomass essential for the survival of the poor, into ecologically disruptive eucalyptus plantations.

The main charges against eucalyptus by the environmentalists are that these species dryup wells in the vicinity, deplete the soil nutrients at a faster rate than the indigenous trees and these plantations fail to meet the fuel, fodder and green manure needs of the poor peasants, the last being one of the stated, objectives of social forestry. Above all, eucalyptus caters to the industrial needs and the species is alien to the socio-economic and ecological milieu of the agrarian societies where the crop-raising practices have been linked to the traditional fodder, fuel and manure yielding tree species. This system has come to stay after centuries of evolution and introduction of eucalyptus would distrupt the ecobalance, environmentalists argue.

Irrelevant

Foresters and environmentalists cross swords and flaunt statistics to disprove each other. But the fact beyond all controversies is the social and environmental irrelevancy of eucalyptus. Even the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) study on eucalyptus, the most comprehensive one on the subject till now, could not provide any conclusive answer. "Having reviewed the evidence very thoroughly, we must stress that there can be no universal answer, either favourable or unfavourable, to the planting of eucalyptus", the report said.

The irrelevance of eucalyptus on the social

count was brought by the then Secretary of the National Wasteland Development Board Mr. N.C.Saxena succinctly: "Eucalyptus has become a symbol of private profiteering at social cost and, therefore, deserves to be discouraged".

Government lease

Another issue crucial to the eucalyptus industry-Government relationship in Karnataka is the threat to the rights of the villagers on the village common lands, which were being taken over for eucalyptus propagation by the joint sector Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL) in collaboration with the Birla-owned Harihar Polyfibres factory, starved of the raw material.

Under an agreement signed in November 1984, the Karnataka Government decided to lease 70,000 acres of "degraded" and reserved forest land to KPL in the four high rainfall districts of Shimoga, Chikmagalur, Dharwad and Belgaum, classified as, 'C' and 'D' lands, for captive eucalyptus plantations to meet the pulpwood needs of Harihar Polyfibres. Protests were launched by environmentalists questioning the very categorisation of good lands as degraded 'C' and 'D' lands. Pitched legal battles began between the environmentalists and the villagers, on the one hand, and the KPL on the other. In November 1986, the Karnataka High Court issued a categorical stay order which is still in operation restraining the KPL from propagating eucalyptus on the disputed lands.

Meanwhile, a second agreement came into force under which even forest lands were assigned to the KPL in total contravention of the Forest Conservation Act and against the Central directives not to grant lands to joint sector undertakings. Finally, the affected villagers whose common land was taken over by the KPL obtained a stay order from the Supreme Court a significant decision with a bearing on the rest of the country, where the issue of rural poor and industry are involved.

The petitioners, including noted Kannada literatteur Shivaram Karanth, contended that the transfer of common village lands to the KPL would deprive the poor villagers of the use of these lands to meet their basic needs of fodder, fuel and small timber and that eucalyptus monocultures would have an adverse long-term impact on the environment.

Environmentalists' plea

The common lands on which the plantations have been conceived are the major essential natural endowments, source of livelihood for at least five lakh persons in these districts, even in their present degraded condition environmentalists argue. According to a study by Mr. N.S.Jodha, former adviser to the Nepal Government, in seven states in India, rural households derived an annual income ranging from Rs. 530 to Rs.830 from these common lands, more than the income generated by many poverty-alleviation programmes of the Government.

Despite the judicial intervention and popular resistance, the KPL, environmentalists allege, went ahead with impunity planting eucalyptus saplings on these lands. That was when the villagers and environmentalists under the banner of the Dharwad-based Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS) came up with a non-violent and creative form of protest. In November last year, villagers in Kunsur in Hangal taluk and also surrounding villages launched a satyagraha. Armed with spades and pick-axes they uprooted eucalyptus saplings planted by the KPL and in their place planted indigenous varieties of tree species under a catchy slogan, "Pluck one, plant one". A confrontation was avoided between the villagers and the KPL men with the intervention of a sympathetic bureaucrat and sober elements among the environmentalists.

Rural resistance

The agitation also took the form of a popular rural resistance asserting their rights against

industrial exploitation. The villagers perceive the exploitation as snatching away their lands previously available for their cattle and sheep, where the craftsmen gathered vines and grass needed to weave baskets and mats and women the fuel for cooking. The agitation caught on.

The official perception to treat the rural resistance as a law and order problem has further alienated the villagers and environmentalists in finding a solution to the issue involving the rights of the people. This year, too, as the KPL is poised to go ahead with planting eucalyptus saplings on a few hundred more acres of these common grazing lands, villagers and the SPS are preparing themselves for yet another battle, a satyagraha, in the same villages. The coming battles would be decisive, for they will have an impact on future conflicts involving the State and the industrial lobby and the democratic rights of the people, whose livelihood has been increasingly threatened in the paradox of a development model with an accent on growth per se, with little concern for the concomitant human consequences.

I. Chandramouli,
Indian Express, Bangalore.
June 7, 1988

Forestry in British and post-British India

The current debate on the draft Forest Act has necessitated an examination of forest policies in India. This article, while analysing colonial and post-colonial forest policies, concentrates on the historical process whereby the traditionally-held rights of the forest communities have been progressively curtailed through the development of forest policy, management and legislation.

While the social imperatives behind forest policy have differed in the two periods under review - being the strategic interests of British imperialism before 1947 and after that the needs of the mercantile and industrial bourgeoisie- the impact on forest dwellers and their life-support systems has been a uniform one. The post-colonial state has taken over and further strengthened the organising principles of colonial forest administration - the assertion of the state monopoly right and exclusion of forest communities.

Section I of the paper deals with forestry in British India and Section II the post-colonial situation. Section III discusses the evolution of forest legislation. In Section IV are set out the author's conclusions.

Ramchandra Guha

Excerpt from: *Economic & Political Weekly*
Oct. 29, 1983

Industrialist - State Combine Plotting to Grab Land

There is no smoke without a fire. But neither a satyagraha in the small village of Kusnur in Karnataka, nor the alarm raised by environmentalists, scientists, social workers and villagers in the state, have evoked a positive response from the powers that be.

As a result, these sections are now asking some very worrying questions : Are big industrialists attempting a land grab movement? Is this very powerful industrialist-state combine going to twist the rule book, circumvent the law, and take over large tracts of forest lands on which the rural poor depend for their food, fodder, fuel and fertiliser? Where do the affected turn as they face such exploitation and gradually come to terms with the fact that the administration does not care?

Attention is being drawn to Karnataka, one of the many states where such trend is in evidence. Here as many as five lakh villagers may alternately be affected by the birth and activities of one joint sector company - the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL).

The KPL was formed in November, 1984, by the Karnataka Forest Plantation Corporation and the Harihar Polyfibres, a Birla concern. Although 5 per cent of KPL's shares rest with the state government, its basic function and purpose is to provide raw material to the rayon producing firm, a unit of the Birla-owned Gwalior Rayon and Silk Manufacturing Company (GRASIM).

To meet these raw material production needs, the KPL was granted the lease of 75,000 acres of degraded forest and C and D class lands for cultivating eucalyptus. Written into its agreement with the state government, was a clause which conveniently empowered the Chief Conservator of Forests to approve "marginal adjustments..... so as to make a compact block of plantation areas".

This according to S.R. Hiremath, convenor of the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, (SPS), a group working for environmental awareness in Dharwad district (one of the four districts in the state in which the KPL has taken over common lands) was one of the means by which the KPL could denude large tracts of forest lands and reafforest them with eucalyptus plantations which are worthless to the villagers. S.R., as he is popularly known, is one of the many active supporters of the affected villagers. He was in Delhi again recently to appeal to the Supreme Court and to those who have followed the development in Karnataka over the past four years, for action against the continued operations of the KPL.

And he is by no means alone. In 1986, the noted Kannada Litterateur, K.S.Karanth; the director of the Centre for Science and Environment, Anil Agarwal; the SPS, and the affected villagers had jointly filed a petition in the Supreme Court, challenging the formation of the KPL and the leasing of land to it for captive eucalyptus plantation to meet the enormous needs of Harihar Polyfibres. Although the Supreme Court had granted a stay, the leaders of the SPS allege that the KPL has not ceased its operations. They are now filing a petition against the KPL for contempt of the Supreme Court order and another for a blanket stay on all the company's operations.

The activities of the KPL have brought into focus several issues, one of which is the question of afforestation. While industrialists argue their case on the grounds that they are contributing to development by cultivating degraded lands, environmentalists point out that not all cultivation is conducive to a forest-type growth. For instance, they explain, eucalyptus, which has been favoured for cultivation by both the ministry of environment and forests, as well as the forest department in Karnataka, provides neither fodder nor "ecology-oriented" tree cover, and thereby serves a very limited purpose.

Evidently this debate has also been carried on in government circles and there has been some rethinking on the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980. The Act, which was very brief, merely stated that areas identified as forest land could not be put to "non-forest use" without the Centre's approval.

In July last year, T.N. Sheshan, the then secretary of the concerned ministry had sent out a directive to all forest departments at the state level qualifying the state's position following requests received by state from individuals, and commercial interest groups for use of such lands for the production of raw material. In this letter he stated that the Government of India does not "propose to permit any such plantations" and that the Centre's approval must be sought before a state government agrees to lease land for such purposes.

Following this a Bill to amend the 1980 Act was tabled before Parliament during the winter session and it is due to come up for discussion during the ensuing monsoon session. The Bill addresses itself to individuals, agencies, and organisations not managed or owned by the government (but is silent on joint sector companies such as the KPL). It defines what is meant by "non-forest" use listing plantations such like coffee, tea, rubber, spices and palms as those for which lands under this proposed legislation cannot be leased.

How does the loss of common lands affect the villagers? According to 1983 statistics, 66.7 per cent of Karnataka's rural population did not earn enough to buy itself adequate nutrition through food. Prof.Madhav Gadgil, of the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Bangalore, in a paper on Biomass Budgets, explains that given this situation, "A very large segment of our population would then be involved in attempts to find some way of acquiring food. The easiest way to do so is to collect food that is naturally produced."

The same would apply to other, very basic, needs of the people which, too, are met by forests and common lands - those of fuel, fodder and fertiliser. To deprive the people of this without an alternative source of affordable subsistence, would be to brutally cut off their lifeline.

It is in the face of such a dire threat that the villagers of Kusnur decided to conduct a satyagraha in November, 1987. They uprooted 100 saplings put down by the KPL and in their place planted trees which are useful to them. In response to their action, the villagers and their representatives were assured that the state would conduct an inquiry and that Madhav Gadgil would be approached to head the commission to investigate the villagers' complaints. The people responded in good faith by calling off their agitation. However, only a few days ago, the Karnataka government reneged on this assurance and, instead, announced that it would have to look into the vested interests behind the agitation, according to a newspaper report.

The movement in Kusnur has been forced into an agitational one again. SPS leaders have declared that the next satyagraha will be held on August 8, on the eve of the anniversary of the Quit India Movement. No word has been received from the chief minister and the case in the Supreme Court has still to be heard. Meanwhile the rumblings of discontent can be heard in the other affected districts in Karnataka - in Shimoga, Chickmagalur and in Belgaum.

On August 8, the villagers will march in a brave attempt to pit their might against a most awesome combine. They will carry saplings of trees that blossom, trees that bear fruit, trees that birds will nest in. These they will put down where eucalyptus saplings planted by the satyagrahis will symbolise the right of the rural poor to life. And, as a test case, it remains to be seen just how ruthless and uncaring the state will be, with whom it will align, and for how long.

Namita Sinha

The Times of India, New Delhi: July 1988

Organising Villages against "Development"

For the last 40 years, I have covered wars, insurrections, riots, satyagrahas and other forms of social violence and tension. But never have I felt so personally threatened and faced so much hostility as when a bunch of KPL (Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd) toughs held up my taxi at dusk on a remote dirty road three months ago.

The incident illustrates how passions have been aroused by KPL operations, which were justified in Bangalore as bringing prosperity to rural Karnataka. I was present when the agitation against KPL began in Kusnur, a village in the area, on 14 November last year. To appreciate the importance of the Kusnur satyagraha, one must realise what the gradual seizure by KPL of 30,000 hectares of common lands means to the rural poor. As I explained in my articles in *Deccan Herald* (19 and 20 November), before the take-over, "Cattle and sheep could be grazed there; local craftsmen could gather the grasses and vines needed to weave baskets and mats; women could gather branches and leaves for cooking fuel; seasonal fruits and herbs could be picked free.

POOR HURT

"Since the area was planted with eucalyptus saplings, the poorest villagers have been hardest hit. Nothing else grows where eucalyptus is planted; no grass, no undergrowth, no flowers; no animal will touch its bark or leaves. No birds sing, for no birds will nest there."

"Eucalyptus trees only satisfy the enormous appetite of the Harihar Polyfibres plant 90 kms away. Huge tracts of forest land throughout the region have been converted into eucalyptus plantations to feed the Birla-owned plant which produces the fibre needed to manufacture rayon and other synthetic materials."

KPL was set up on 14 November 1984, by the Janata government "for the sole purpose of growing eucalyptus and other fast-growing varieties... for the captive consumption of Harihar Polyfibres". The original agreement to supply pulpwood to Harihar Polyfibres was negotiated by the previous Congress(I) government in the state. KPL was needed when the demand greatly exceeded supply. The area originally meant for KPL was less than 10,000 hectares, but was more than trebled to match the plant's requirements.

The land handed over to KPL is officially described as "C and D class" as well as "degraded forest lands". But during a tour of the area, I found rich forests also being bulldozed. In some cases, they had been described as degraded by Forest Department officials. Others represented the discretion given to the Chief Conservator of Forests to approve "adjustments...so as to make a compact block of plantation areas".

The eagerness to hand over land to KPL arises both from the Birla company's clout and the private benefit of selling timber from land classified as degraded by a notoriously corrupt Forest Department. But with both major parties involved in the deal, MLAs have kept clear of the dispute.

Even so, the stir created by KPL's terror tactics, and my further articles in *Deccan Herald* (5 and 6 May, 1988), created fears of a major confrontation during the next satyagraha planned for 20 June. Village leaders and SPS activists were invited to meetings with the state chief secretary and other officials at which it was agreed that the satyagraha would be called off in return for the appointment of a one-man committee consisting of the noted environmentalist, Madhav Gadgil. The committee was to inquire into the issue and report within three months, and in the meantime KPL operations in Dharwad district would be stopped.

Once the satyagraha was suspended, however, the officials began to backtrack. When KPL

continued operations in Dharwad, contrary to the agreement, the deputy commissioner confessed that he had received no official orders to stop them. Gadgil was contacted on the phone but not formally invited to constitute an inquiry. Finally, though the state development commissioner had written to SPS that the inquiry would receive "the highest consideration," the forest minister announced on 12 July that there was no proposal to appoint a committee at all.

NEW SATYAGRAHA

Having realised how little trust can be placed on verbal assurances, residents of the Kusnur complex of villages are preparing for a renewed uproot-and-plant satyagraha on 8 August. They realise that victories cannot be won so easily over powerful political and industrial interests on an issue which will have repercussions throughout the country.

SPS has also taken the issue to the Supreme Court and won a stay order. It tries hard to work within the law and to focus public opinion on major issues usually ignored by the urban press. On its success, and that of other non party social organisations like it, may depend the fate of a democracy entirely corrupted by partisan politics.

Ajit Bhattacharjea

Business India : 25 July - Aug 6, 1988.

The author is editorial adviser, The Deccan Herald.

Public meeting prior to the Satyagraha. Prof. K.S. Sharma, President, Karnataka State Federation of Daily Wage Workers addressing the meeting. On his left is Shri Doreswamy of the Gandhi Peace Foundation who presided over the meeting.

Kusnur : Aug. 8, 1988

A 'Save the Greens' Stir

Environmentalists launch a fresh campaign against the joint sector Karnataka Pulpwood Limited

Environmentalists in Karnataka have discovered fresh ground to battle the Ramakrishna Hegde government in the controversial case of the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL), a state-Birla enterprise. In a petition before the Supreme Court on 18 July, Jnanpith Award winner Dr Shivarama Karanth and others charged the government with wilful suppression of material facts, contempt of court and perjury in seeking vacation of a stay on KPL operations.

The joint sector company formed by the state-owned Karnataka Forest Plantations Corporation and the Birla owned Harihar Polyfibres which came into being on 14 November, 1984 has been in the thick of controversy ever since. The company was to have planted eucalyptus and "other fast growing" trees on 75,000 acres of village common lands in six districts of the state, to supply raw material for rayon from Harihar Polyfibres on the banks of the river Tungabhadra. Environmentalists have dubbed the KPL as a "brutal engine of exploitation" for depriving rural people of grazing lands, raw material for local crafts, cooking fuel and seasonal fruits and herbs. The environmentalists were successful in obtaining a stay from the Supreme Court on the company's operations in March 1987.

The government while filing objections before the court in November 1987 claimed that only 3490.38 hectares of C and D class land and degraded forest lands had been released to the company. On the same day Harihar Polyfibres in its counter-affidavit claimed that "the balance amount of 66,100 acres have not been identified or earmarked for allocation to the concerned respondent". The Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS) which is spearheading the environmentalists' agitation now claims to have documentary evidence to prove that on 2 September, 1987 more than 37,000 acres had been identified, earmarked and ordered for transfer by the government to the company.

SPS president, S.R. Hiremath, said on 21 July that the government and the company had committed contempt of the Supreme Court by actively carrying out transfer of lands and plantations even as the hearings and final arguments were going on. SPS members managed to come across these 'large scale violations' in May this year barely two weeks after the court's modified stay order.

Meanwhile, SPS and other environmentalists have planned a 'pluck and plant' *satyagraha* on Quit India Day, 8 August, at Kusnur, a village largely affected by the company's activities in Dharwad district. Infact, a *satyagraha* - which comprises plucking out eucalyptus saplings and planting of local trees - was carried out last November to mark the third anniversary of the company. "The issue is whether precious common lands for villagers could be handed over to wood-based industries, without regard to the damage it causes to rural environment," says Hiremath.

Prakash Belawadi

Sunday Bangalore : 31 July - 6 August 1988.

Satyagraha to Re-establish Right on Common Land

August 8 is the 46th anniversary of the launching of the Quit India movement that helped liberate the country from the clutches of British colonialism. It is also the day the people of Kusnur and the surrounding villages in Hangal taluk, Dharwad district, have chosen to offer satyagraha to liberate their village common lands which have been "usurped" by an industrial giant. The industry in question is the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL), a joint sector company.

The satyagraha will be a novel one. Villagers plan to uproot the eucalyptus saplings planted by KPL for its industrial raw material needs and plant fodder and fruit-yielding and socially useful native species.

At the heart of the matter lies the question - What are the common lands ("gomals", revenue land and forests) meant for? To supply raw materials for profit-making industries or to meet the basic fodder, fuel and food needs of the rural poor?

Nor are these issues restricted to Karnataka alone. At stake is the livelihood of millions of marginal farmers, rural landless and tribals all over India.

The people of Kusnur have taken it upon themselves to provide an answer on August 8. They seek to re-establish their rights over the land that has supported them from times immemorial. These simple people are no strangers to satyagraha. Theirs has been a long and relentless struggle for the last four years and they carried out a "pluck-and-plant" satyagraha on November 14, 1987.

The villagers' woes may be said to have begun on November 14, 1984, the day the government of Karnataka and Harihar Polyfibres factory (HPF), a rayon production unit, signed an agreement to form Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd., a joint sector company. The chief objective of the new company was to grow softwood species, chiefly eucalyptus, for the captive consumption of HPF. This Rs 30-crore enterprise was financed with the government contributing 51 per cent (Rs 16 crore) of the total outlay, and the National bank for agriculture and rural development (NABARD) contributing 23 per cent (Rs.7 crore).

REPERCUSSIONS

The agreement envisaged the transfer of 30,000 hectares of "C" and "D" class revenue land and degraded forest land to the joint sector company on a long-term lease. The lands were to be leased in six districts of Karnataka - Chickmagalur, Shimoga, Dharwad, Belgaum, Hassan and Uttara Kannada.

The repercussions of this agreement and the consequent transfer of land began to be felt throughout the six districts, as clusters of villages found themselves suddenly dispossessed of all their village common lands. The Kusnur cluster, comprising of Kusnur, Kerekyathanahalli, Byagawadi, Somasagar and Hirebasur villages, was one such, which lost 400 hectares almost overnight.

To the villagers, these common lands mean fodder for their animals, firewood for their ovens, fertilizer for their fields, raw materials for their artisans - in short, the common lands are indispensable for the village economy. By denying them all these, the KPL agreement jeopardised their very survival.

Says Hanumanthappa Waddar, a landless shepherd of the area : "The bank gave me loan to buy 14 sheep but where am I to graze them?" Uniformed guards had "seized" his sheep for grazing on what was claimed to be unauthorised land. After a lengthy arbitration they returned only 13. Waddar sold the animals because he was not able to find fodder to sustain them. He has not only slid back into poverty,

but today he is a debtor.

Women who go out to gather firewood return empty-handed, their implements are seized and they are harassed. Traditional crafts such as basket-weaving, mat-making and leaf-plate making are on their way out as the native species of wood that supplied the raw material for making these are no longer to be found.

In Hirebasur, the people have even been prevented from fishing in the lake that borders the KPL plantation. As these difficulties began to mount, the villagers organised themselves to reclaim their common lands. They began to learn and to investigate. What they found was truly shocking.

In Hulagaddi village of Hangal taluk bulldozers were used to "wipe out" the existing vegetation. Even "matti" and sandal trees were not spared. The bulldozing destroyed the natural water canals that fed the only lake in the village, thus gravely threatening the traditional irrigation practices.

What is more, while KPL had been transferred only forest land of survey Nos. 107-110 (74 hectares) bulldozing was carried out on two additional survey Nos. 112 and 113 (totalling 26 hectares) which had not even been transferred. These survey numbers are not even forest land. The record of rights show them to be government wasteland reserved for pasturage.

The villagers of Hulagaddi wrote in protest to the forest authorities and the local MLA also raised this issue with the forest department.

In Uppunasi and Guddadamulathalli, too, transfer of land to KPL had been ordered when the concerned survey numbers were still under the revenue department. Plantation activity is currently going on even as some of this land continues to be under the revenue department.

In Hirebasur village, over 32 hectares of government-owned plantations grown by the people under the rural landless employment guarantee programme (RLEGP) were bulldozed. The resulting loss to the government has been recorded and estimated to be around Rs 80,000.

In Dhamne, a village bordering Maharashtra in Belgaum taluk, 400 hectares of lush forest in the heart of the western ghats have been handed over to KPL. The tribal Gowlis, who live by tending their cattle, are put to serious difficulty by the denial of their traditional grazing rights.

At various times the villagers sent representations to the chief minister, senior officials and the local administration. These memoranda elicited no response.

The people then decided to appeal to the courts. Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, a voluntary organisation, that has been actively engaged in environmental issues all over Karnataka, aided by the eminent author and Jnanpith award winner, Dr.K.Shivarama Karanth, helped the affected people to move the Supreme Court in December 1986. The Supreme Court responded by issuing on March 24, 1987 a stay on the ownership of the land. At this point only 3,600 hectares had been transferred to KPL.

Despite the stay order, the KPL operations continued resulting in a contempt case against 12 senior officials, including those of KPL, and the decision to widen the struggle.

NOT HONOURED

On June 3, 1988, senior officials of the state government, including the chief secretary and officials of the various departments, called for a meeting with the representatives of the affected people.

In the meeting the officials urged the affected people to call off the satyagraha and promised to order the ceasing of KPL operations in Dharwad district. It was also agreed to appoint Prof. Madhav Gadgil, eminent environmentalist and head of the centre for ecological sciences, Indian Institute of

Science as a one-man commission to study the problem of common land utilisation and advise the government. The affected people were only too happy to avoid a confrontation with the government. While they honoured their part of the agreement by calling off the satyagraha, KPL operations continued and a large-scale plantation was carried out on June 28 1988. The deputy commissioner of Dharwad district visited the site, but was unable to stop KPL. The affected people decided to give the government time till July 20, 1988 to bring KPL operations in Dharwad district to a half. This day has also gone and no action has yet been taken by the government. The Madhav Gadgil commission has also not been appointed.

— Vishnu Kamath

The Times of India, Bangalore : August 6 1988.

Satyagrahis march to the KPL occupied lands.
Kusnur : Aug. 8, 1988

NEWS

Movement against KPL intensified

Express News Service

Hubli, Nov. 4: The environmental organisations in Karnataka have made a fervent appeal to the Government, once again, to withdraw its agreement on Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL) for the well-being of the poor people of the villages.

In a joint memorandum submitted to Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde, the voluntary organisations have said the KPL project, which envisaged cultivation of eucalyptus in over 75,000 acres of common lands of villages for use as raw material for a rayon silk manufacturing industry, would adversely affect about five lakh rural people, especially the poor in the four districts of Dharwad, Shimoga, Chikmagalur and Belgaum. The KPL was formed in 1948.

The people who had, for generations depended on the common lands for their basic needs such as fodder for cattle, fuel wood, raw materials for artisans, leaves for manure, fruits and timber for housing, would be deprived of these facilities since the lands had been leased out to the industry for cultivation of only eucalyptus.

The voluntary organisations and prominent environmentalists of the state like Jnanapith award winner Dr. Shivaram Karanth, former Karnataka Chief Minister Kadidal Manjappa, former High Court Justice -D. M. Chandrasekhar and noted jurist and civil liberty movement leader V.M.Tarkunde have represented to the Karnataka Government on various occasions in the past on the disastrous consequences of the KPL project and suggested reforms in the forest and industrial policy of the Government.

In March 1985, the leading voluntary agencies and environmentalists had submitted a memorandum requesting for the cancellation of the KPL project and also offering to work with the Government in the field of social forestry and wasteland development to help the rural poor meet their basic needs by regenerating the lands. They had also suggested cancellation of another related project called farm forestry involving over 45,000 acres lands in four districts within the 100 km. radius of the Harihar Polyfibres Factory.

The project envisaged granting of these lands at the rate of one hectare per year for seven years to each of the rural poor families who would grow only eucalyptus and sell it to the factory at reasonable rate. Happily enough this project was dropped by the Government.

The environmentalists, however, have been disappointed by the attitude of the Government as far as the KPL project was concerned.

The people, who have been denied their benefits from the common lands have also been not only protesting against the KPL but also launched concerted campaigns to get back the lands. The farmers of Sagar taluk in Shimoga district filed a case in the Karnataka High Court which issued an interim order directing the Deputy Commissioner to ensure that the villagers continued to have access to the common lands.

The Samaj Parivartan Samudaya of Dharwad, led by Dr. Shivaram Karanth filed a public interest litigation in the

Supreme Court last year. Among the other prominent petitioners were Anil Agarwal of the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, Mr. S. R. Ramaswamy of Mannu Rakshna Koota, Bangalore and S.R.Hiremath of Samudaya. The Central Government had given financial assistance to fight the case.

In March, this year, the Supreme Court ordered that status quo should be maintained thus preventing further transfer of any lands to the KPL.

But the voluntary organisation cited instances of the KPL officials going ahead with the operation in violation of Supreme Court order and committing contempt of court. Villagers of Kusnur in Hangal taluk in Dharwad district have filed affidavits in the Hubli court submitting that the KPL had been guilty of contempt of court.

The people of villages affected by the KPL have now decided to assemble at Kusnur on Nov. 14 next to formally launch a non-violent satyagraha against the KPL. The people will symbolically remove 100 eucalyptus trees and plant trees useful for the poor. A "Nov. 14 programme" has been formed under the leadership of Mr. S.L.Pawar of Ranebennur. They have called the movement "Kittiko-Hachchiko" - pluck and plant.

Indian Express
Bangalore : Nov 5-87

Many proposals pending with states

By Bharat Bhushan

NEW DELHI : Encouraged by certain policy recommendations of the National Wastelands Development Board, a number of private industries have shown interest in growing commercial plantations on wastelands.

If the recommendations are accepted, then over a period of time upto 50 per cent of the total forest area of India could potentially be handed over to the private corporate sector either on direct lease or through some other arrangement. This amounts to about 34 million hectares of degraded forest land. In addition, industry would also like to be able to put forward proposals for using a substantial portion of the 93.7 million hectares of non-forest degraded land. According to current estimates, less than five per cent of the total wastelands in the country would suffice to meet industrial needs over the next decade. But once access to private industry is accepted as a principle then its demand on diverting wastelands to commercial uses may grow over time.

PRIMARY AIM

The recommendations of the Wastelands Board, currently under consideration by the ministry of environment and forests, aim primarily at encouraging industry to raise captive plantations by afforesting wastelands "to develop effective alternative sources of raw material required by forest based industries". In addition, industry is also to be encouraged to undertake plantations on wasteland to supply fuelwood and fodder needs of the rural community.

Encouragement to private industry to do this is

proposed to be provided by granting special permission under the forest and land use laws, offering concessional finance and through other fiscal measures.

The industries that have evinced interest in using wastelands to meet their cellulosic raw material requirements cover pulp and paper (including newsprint) manufacturers, plywood manufacturers, thermoset plastic manufacturers, vegetable oil and soap manufacturers and calcium carbide manufacturers in search of low cost captive sources of charcoal.

Although most of the proposals from private industry are still under consideration by various state governments, at least two states, Orissa and Karnataka, have gone ahead and leased wastelands to private companies for use.

The Orissa government has granted a licence to Straw Products Ltd. of the J.K. group to develop a plantation on state government owned non-forest land and utilise the usufruct from the area.

In Karnataka, two projects involving Gwalior Rayon (Harihar Polyfibres) have been approved to produce pulpwood to meet the captive industrial requirements of the company. The first is a farm forestry project on 13,000 ha. and the other is a joint venture with the Karnataka government on 30,000 ha. While the first project has run into problems because of present regulations of banks and the government about granting financial assistance, the second project is facing the onslaught of agitations by public interest groups opposing the leasing of wastelands to private industry

OTHER PROPOSALS

But there are at least a dozen other such proposals for captive use of wasteland lying with various state governments and awaiting their goahead. If in the meantime the recommendations of the Wastelands Board were to be accepted, the state governments would be swamped with requests for wastelands from the private sector.

The biggest single proposal for leasing in wastelands as yet has come from Pallas Associates Pvt. Ltd. of Maharashtra. The company, with its plans to set up a 1,200 tonnes per day capacity paper mill, is interested in leasing 1.5 to 5 lakh hectares of wastelands for paper /pulp wood plantations in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

In Mahrashtra, three requests for using wastelands are pending with the state government - Shree Vindhya Paper Mills wants 232 ha. land for growing Mesta and Eucalyptus; Ion Exchange (India) is interested in about 180 ha. .of wastelands in the Mahabaleshwar-Panchagani area and Pudumjee Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd. of Pune wants to lease in 500-1000 acres of wastelands.

In Karnataka and Maharashtra, the state governments are looking into a proposal from the West Coast Paper Mills, to set up two captive plantations of bamboo and eucalyptus in the wastelands available in Karnataka as well as in the adjacent parts of Maharashtra. While the first project relates to covering 16,000 ha. of wastelands belonging to the government with bamboo, eucalyptus and subabul, the second aims at growing 4,000 ha. of eucalyptus in private wastelands through farmers who own

these lands. In A.P., a request from Bhadrachalam Paper Boards Ltd. for wastelands use is pending with the government.

TEMPLE LANDS

In Tamil Nadu, New Ambadi Estates Pvt. Ltd. have put forward a proposal for setting up a 5,000 ha. joint-sector wastelands project in the Pasumpon Muthuaramalingam district. A proposal from Industrial Chemicals and Monomers Ltd. for leasing 1,000 ha. of wastelands in the ownership of temples in the districts of Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari and Ramanand is also under consideration of the Tamil Nadu government. The company wants to raise a plantation of prosopis juliflora for producing charcoal which can then be used to produce calcium carbide.

Tata Industries Ltd. are apparently interested in undertaking jojoba plantation for oil extraction on semi-arid lands of Kutch and Rajasthan using "suitable biotechnology". However, they have not as yet submitted a detailed project report to the state governments involved.

In Gujarat, a proposal has been put forward by Lauric Oilseeds Seedlings (India) Pvt. Ltd. of Bombay to set up salvadorea persica (Pilu) oilseeds plantations in areas where acute problems of water availability and salinity of soil exist. The project expects to cover 275 villages in eight talukas of the districts of Bhavnagar, Surendranagar, Ahmedabad and Kheda. It consists of 6,000 ha. of captive plantation and 19,000 ha. of farm forestry.

PAPER MILL

The Madhya Pradesh government has set up a joint sector paper mill project which requires 20,000 ha. of wastelands for meeting their captive requirements of raw material. So far they have applied for 13,000 ha. of degraded forest land but have yet to be allotted land. They plan a production of 40 tonnes per hectare of an eight year cycle, with species like eucalyptus, subabul and acacia nilotica.

In Haryana, Nuchem Plastics Ltd. have submitted a proposal for raising a 5,000 ha. eucalyptus, poplar, subabul and kikar plantation in the waterlogged wastelands of Ambala district.

The primary reason why these proposals are still under consideration by the state governments is that most of them require concessions to be given under the state land reform acts and require special clearances where reserved forest land is sought to be used. Secondly, representatives of private industry are busy lobbying the government for fiscal and financial concessions for investment in plantations on wastelands.

If the Central and the State Governments accept the recommendations of the Wastelands Development Board, then most of the demands of the private industry would have been met. But many believe that were this to happen, it would be at the cost of equity and protection of the environment.

The Times of India
March-5-87

Industrialists not to get plantation land

Hindustan Times Correspondent

NEW DELHI : Oct. 30, 87 - The Central Government has taken a policy decision not to award forest land for plantation to the industrialists. Because the kind of trees they grow would affect the country's flora.

That the industrialists are not true lovers of afforestation was known at today's meeting of the consultative committee of the members of Parliament, attached to the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Presiding over the meeting, the Minister for Environment and Forests, Mr. Bhajan Lal, announced that the forest land in no case would be leased out to the industrialists for plantation, which would be done by the Forest Department only.

The forests were not for exploitation only, Mr. Lal said adding that they also sustain life and ecology and the government had strengthened the legal framework to protect them.

Talking further on the "industrialists-forest relationship" the Minister of State, Mr. Z.R.Ansari, said that a large number of people, particularly the weaker sections, depended on the forests for their livelihood and collecting things like wood for daily requirements. The leasing out of the forest land to the industrialists would affect these people's interests, he felt.

There was a need for using the latest technology for forest development, which the industrialists would not be in a position to do, Mr. Ansari emphasised.

Earlier, Mr. Bhajan Lal, while talking about making afforestation a people's movement, said that the National Wastelands Development Board (NWDB) was encouraging "decentralised nursery system" and tree "patra" schemes.

The NWDB, the Minister said, was also encouraging schools and panchayats to have their own nurseries and land for afforestation. The 'degraded land' was also being allotted to the landless and weaker sections for afforestation.

Talking about the measures being taken to develop forests, the Secretary, Mr. T. N. Seshan, said that it had now been discovered that the notion that only 14.10% of the total land of the country was covered by forest was wrong.

The correct figure was 19.52%, Mr. Seshan claimed, explaining that the experts had reached this conclusion after studying data compiled by the Forest Survey of India and the National Remote Sensing Agency.

According to these organisations' study, the total forest area was 19.52%, of which 10.88% was "closed forest", 8.41% "open forest", 0.12% man-made forest and 1.10% coffee plantations.

Like last year, he said, the National Environment Awareness Campaign would be launched from November 19 to December 18 through newspapers, radio, television talks, workshops and symposiums. This year's theme would be: "Link between environment degradation and the recurrent drought and floods".

Voluntary agencies would be associated with this

campaign. Mr. Sheshan said informing that the Ministry had already aproved their 250 proposals. Last year, 150 non-governmental organisations, besides the official agencies, took part in the environmental awareness programme.

Pulled out from the roots

From Our Staff Reporter

HANGAL, Nov. 17.

Kusnur village in Hangal taluk of Dharwad district has joined the environment movement.

Last Saturday 2,000 people, villagers and environmentalists, participated in a "pull-out-and-plant" campaign. Over 100 eucalyptus trees of different sizes were dug up and replaced with fruit-bearing saplings.

This movement against eucalyptus in Karnataka has been triggered by the State Government's move to hand-over land in Malnad area to the Karnataka Pulpwood, a joint sector undertaking of the Karnataka Government and Harihar Polyfibres.

The Government handed over Chikmaglur, Shimoga, Dharwad and Belgaum districts for eucalyptus cultivation to the pulpwood company. But environmentalists felt this move was detrimental to the interests of the rural population as it would deprive them of firewood and fodder. The Kannada writer, Dr. Shivaram Karanth, and others including the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, filed a petition in the Supreme Court and obtained a stay on the transfer of common land.

But the stay order was violated and many ryots went to the local courts against the continued planting of eucalyptus.

While the legal battle was on, environmentalists took steps to mobilise opinion and make farmers aware of the ill-effects of the Government's action.

People's anger: Last Saturday's Satyagraha organised by the local Hill Development Committee and other voluntary organisations was the first decisive expression of the people's anger over massive eucalyptus farming programme. People from neighbouring villages assembled under the leadership of Messrs. Jyotibhai Desai of the Institute of Total Revolution, Gujarat, Hiremath of the Samaj Parivartan Samudaya and mar ched 3 km. to the venue- 200-hectare eucalyptus plantation of the Pulpwood Company.

Before the march began the police tried to dissuade the agitators from pulling out the trees. But the leaders reassured police that satyagraha would be peaceful. Near the spot, the company's staff, forest guards and labourers tried to block the marchers.

The Tahsildar and Mr. Mahendra Jain, Assistant Commissioner of Hangal subdivision, asked the company staff to allow the demonstrators to carry out their campaign peacefully. That was the sign for them to pull out 100 eucalyptus plants.Some villagers said they were pressured not to participate in the movement.

Mr.T.N.Seshan, Secretary to Environment Department, Government of India, in a recent notification had told all the Chief Conservators of Forests that no individual Institution or joint sector project would be allowed to raise plantation in forests.

The Hindu 18-11-87

Fighting for Common Lands

By Kamalesh Patil

Environmental groups and poor people in the state of Karnataka, India, have won an important victory in their fight to maintain common lands, which they say are vital for their own survival and the protection of the local ecology.

At the end of March, the Supreme Court issued what is known as a stay order on nearly 80,000 acres of common lands, which were due to be transferred into the ownership of a joint-sector company set up by Harihar Polyfibres and the state government of Karnataka. The developers' idea was to grow eucalyptus trees and other fast growing species which would provide raw materials for making rayon and other synthetic products.

The case put forward by the petitioners to the Supreme Court was that generations of local people have depended on these common lands and their natural vegetation for fodder, fuel, green manure, raw material used by artisans and firewood. For them, the land is a valuable resource, which provides an essential supplement to their subsistence existence.

The poor peasants got the backing of a number of prominent personalities, including the veteran writer and environmentalist Dr.Shivaram Karanth, and a number of non-governmental organisations, which have been campaigning on the twin issues of protecting poor people's rights at the same time as the ecology.

Objectors to the Karnataka scheme were particularly concerned that eucalyptus was selected as the main plant to be grown on the lands. They say that experience both in Karnataka and elsewhere in the world shows that plantations of eucalyptus trees can have a devastating effect on the nutritive quality of the soil as well as on the water table in the area.

Such negative effects would, they believe, be felt beyond the boundaries of the common lands themselves, as gradually the area around the eucalyptus would be drained of subterranean water and would turn barren.

There has already been considerable planting of eucalyptus in Karnataka, especially since the 1960s, when its potential as a source of raw material for the pulp-wood industry was realised. Large tracts of forest land in the Western Ghats were replanted with eucalyptus.

In 1981, two researchers at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore made a study of the eucalyptus plantations in Karnataka and criticised strongly forest projects being carried out by the Karnataka government with the assistance of the World Bank.

Direct action by some local peasant farmers, who had noticed the increasing aridity of their lands, ensued. Eucalyptus saplings were uprooted and many farmers refused to have anything to do with the scheme. The state government then turned its attention to the possibility of joint ventures with industry.

Harihar Polyfibres, who were the partners chosen from the contested Karnataka scheme, are no strangers to controversy. Several villagers and voluntary organisations in Dharwad district filed a suit against the company in the

Karnataka High Court, accusing its factory of causing river and air pollution by emitting dangerous effluents. In the wake of the terrible Bhopal gas disaster of December 1984, the whole question of industrial pollution has become a highly emotive issue in India. Yet, controls of pollution are nowhere near as stringent as they need to be. It is still rare for anyone to challenge offenders in Court- and even rarer for them to get effective action or compensation.

The Karnataka case is being watched with interest by many groups in India, as several important principles are at stake, which affect a large number of schemes and communities. The permanence of common lands is just one of them.

At the centre of most of the controversies though, are the rights and the survival of poor people. Politically, landless peasants and others who depend on common lands and the freely- available resources of forests have very little influence or power, but through community organisations and environmental groups, they can make their voice heard.

Increasingly, one way of doing that is to take their complaints abroad. Usually, help from supportive organisations or individuals is needed, as the peasants themselves do not know whom to turn to or how to present their case in a way that will be easily understood.

Backers of the peasants in Karnataka, therefore, have written submissions to the World Bank and other foreign donors to development projects, pointing out the environmental impact of schemes as well as the role of the local people.

Often their arguments get a sympathetic hearing, as one of the tenets of contemporary development schemes is that they should both meet the needs of the people (and preferably the poorest people) and involve the active participation of those people.

Schemes such as the eucalyptus plantations planned for Karnataka's common lands clearly do not meet either of these criteria. But that does not necessarily mean they will be stopped.

The environmental movement in India is growing and has excellent links with the community. But it is still far from a position in which it can take victory for granted.

Earthscan Feature (U.K.)
1 May 1987

Deforestation; Renewed Protests

Farmers took out processions and organised protest meetings on November 14, since it was on that day, two years ago, the Karnataka Pulpwood Company came into being. The loudest protests however, have come from Shimoga, Chikmagalur and Dharwad districts. The Government has extended the operation of the scheme to four more taluks, namely, Hangal, Hirekerur and Hubli in Dharwad district and Kittur in the Belgaum district.

The controversy started two years ago, when the Government's forest department and the Harihar Polyfibres Company jointly floated the Karnataka Pulpwood Company (KPL) with a view to growing eucalyptus and other pulpwood species all over the State. The Government was to make available to the joint sector firm 30,000

hectares of land in the five taluks of Koppa, Chikmagalur, Bhadravathi, Shimoga and Sagar.

The scheme attracted protests from several quarters and in the forefront was the Mannu Rakshana Koota.

Besides the Mannu Rakshana Koota, the Citizens for Democracy Karnataka, the Shimoga based Rajya Raitha Sangha, the Bharatiya Kisan Sangha, the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS) as well as several local organisations like the Tungabhadra Parisara Samiti of the downstream villages on the banks of the river polluted by the discharge of untreated effluents in Dharwad district, the Save Western Ghats Forum of Shimoga, Vriksha Samrakshisi Vedike (save tree forum) of Sagar are involved in the campaign.

The agitation leaders have pointed out that the 30,000 hectares are common facility lands, used by the farmers for grazing their cattle, collecting firewood and leaves for manure. Besides a considerable portion was utilised for farming.

The Mannu Rakshana Koota also maintains that a large portion of thick forests in the Malnad, forming part of the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats are also included in the areas being earmarked.

According to them, if the forests in the Western Ghats are denuded, it would adversely affect the entire Deccan plateau since the Western Ghats are the source of life.

Already Malnad had too many projects. Thousands of hectares of rich forests had been submerged by two hydel projects and denuded for mobilising raw material for a paper mill. The proposed Kaiga nuclear power project bordering Malnad was sure to affect several hundred acres of forests.

The Forest Department sources argue that the agitation of the farmers in the Malnad region was over a "non issue". The sources explained that the 30,000 hectares were all degraded lands classified as C and D, where nothing could be grown. The apprehension of the farmers that they would be deprived of fuelwood and leaves for manure was without basis, as, under the agreement, the joint sector firm was obliged to earmark at least five per cent of the land for growing fodder and trees for the supply of fuel wood.

The agitation leaders, however, repudiated the contention of the Forest Department officials that the lands being earmarked were degraded. They asserted that there were no degraded lands in the Malnad region, as it usually received good rains and was covered by forests.

Demonstration: Since November 14 farmers in various parts of the State have been registering their protests. In Ranebennur of Dharwad district, over 500 villagers took out a procession and burnt rayon clothes to protest against destruction of forests. A memorandum was submitted to the tahsildar of the taluk. Those who participated in the agitation included Mr. Jyotibhai Desai of Sampoorna Kranti Vidyalaya of Gujarat, Mr. Siddharaj Dhadda of Sarva Seva Sangh of Jaipur in Rajasthan, Mr. Hiremath of the Dharwad-based Citizens for Democracy Forum and Mr. B.H.Bannikod of the Farmers and Farm Labourers' Association of Ranebennur.

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In Kittur of Belgaum district the Rajya Raita Sangha (Farmer's Association) leaders, participated. In the procession and protest programmes at Davangere in Chitradurga district, the Gandhi Peace Foundation, Karnataka and the Environment Committee of Ranebennur took part. In Sagar of Shimoga district over 2,000 farmers from more than 100 villages took part in the procession. A memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister was submitted to the Assistant Commissioner. Similar processions and meetings have been reported from Koppa town in the Chikmagalur district, Hosanagar town in the Shimoga district and Bhadravathi taluks-Bangalore.

Staff Reporter.
The Hindu :Dec-5-86

Experts cry halt to privatisation

Express News Service

Dharwad, Nov. 29: An area which has received poor attention from policy-makers and planners is the "common property resources" of people living in villages and studies by experts have revealed that the neglect of this vital aspect has cost very dearly to the rural economy.

Large-scale privatisation of common property resources like pastures, community forests, threshing grounds, waste lands, ponds, watershed drainages and river-beds, had deprived the poor villagers a significant part of their sources of sustenance.

If a precipitation is to be prevented and a headway is to be made towards realisation of the much-talked of "gram-swaraj" there is need for restoring these common property resources to the rural poor. Programmes also must be aimed at increased productivity on these resources.

The two-day national seminar on "Common Lands Issue" on Nov. 23 and 24 threw interesting light on these facts. The focus of the discussion was on environmental organisations in and outside the State sharing their studies and impressions about the problems faced by the rural poor after their alienation from their collective sources. Personal experiences of several villagers formed part of the seminar.

The seminar was jointly sponsored by Samaj Parivartana Samudaya of Dharwad and the Centre for Ecological Science of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. Centre for Science and Environment, Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development and Development Alternatives, all of Delhi, Favord, Bangalore and India Development Service of Dharwad also took part.

The seminar was supported by the National Environment Awareness-87, New Delhi, a cell of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The seminar was divided into different sessions, each dealing with an important facet of the common lands issue and followed by lively debate on points made by the main speaker. A unique feature was that two sessions were dedicated exclusively for recounting of experiences by the villagers and the activists of the voluntary organisations working at the grassroot level.

Dr. Madhav Gadgil, Convener of the Centre for

Ecological Sciences of IISc, Bangalore, gave a historical perspective of the management of common lands and emphasised the need to create new social institutions at the local level to control and manage local resources.

Speaking on management of common lands, Mr.V.B.Eswaran, Executive Director of Socicty for Promotion of Wasteland Development (New Delhi) said there was need to save and develop forests.

Villagers, including women, from Hirekerur, Hangal, Hubli and Dharwad taluks explained how, with the help and guidance of voluntary agencies they had been eking out their livelihood by involving themselves in community programmes on wastelands granted by the Government.

Among the activists who spoke were Mr. Anant Hegde of Vriksha Raksha Andolan of Sagar, Mr.Shantaram of Myrada, Mr. N.G.Hegde of Bharat Agro-Industries, Mr. Moiddin of Rural Poor and Small Farmers Association, South Kanara, Mr. Narayannappa of Gram Vikas Seeganahalli, Dr. A. N. Kabbur, Mr. Chikkappa and Mrs. Shyamala Hiremath, all of India Development Service, Dr. Sudarshan of Vivekanand Girijan Kalyan Kendra, BR Hills, Mrs. Anjana Souryarajar and Mr.Usman of Tamil Nadu and Mr. Ranjan Rao of Mangalore.

An interesting debate on Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL), a joint sector company, floated by the Birla-owned Grasim Industry and Karnataka Government ensued following on captive plantation. The company had been leased out about 75,000 acre of reserved forests and "C" and "D" class of lands for cultivation of eucalyptus to be used as raw material for production of rayon.

A lot of questions were raised. Dr. Madhav Gadgil wanted to know why, if the industrial need was only five percent as claimed in the paper, the planning was not done to cater to these proportionately. The money invested by the industries also came from banks which again belonged to the people. He suggested that species like bamboo should be grown instead of eucalyptus.

Mr. Dilip Kamat of Belgaum pointed out certain facts which were contrary to the claims of the officials. He pointed out that the KPL had violated the clause of lease that the rights of the local people over the common lands must be protected.

The participants were surprised when Mr. Hullur, Deputy Conservator of Forests (working plans), pointed out that the areas handed over to the KPL were not common lands. An irritated Mr. Devendra Doddamani of Inamveerapur of Hubli taluk challenged the statement saying that the villagers had been commonly using the lands for their needs for more than 2,000 years.

The recent circular issued by the Central Government came up for discussion. The circular, issued by Mr. T.N.Sheshan, Secretary to the Government Ministry of Environment and Forests, stated that the Centre did not permit plantations to be raised by private industries on forest lands and that such leases, if any be cancelled.

The question was raised by Mr.S.R.Hiremath of Dharwad and the answer from the

forest officials was that the State Government had sought some clarification from the Centre about the circular.

In the last session several recommendations were made on the better management of common lands, improved productivity development of wastelands and common property resources as well as equitable and just distribution of produces from these common resources.

Land for eucalyptus : SC urged to restrain Govt

Express News Service

Hubli, Dec.16: A Public interest petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the formation of the "Karnataka Pulpwood Limited" and transferring of over 80,000 acres of revenue land to the forest department for planting eucalyptus trees.

The petition was filed by the Jnanpith award winning Kannada writer and environmentalist, Dr. Shivaram Karanth, Samaj Parivarthana Samudaya President S.R.Ramaswamy and its coordinator S.R.Hiremath, Director of the Centre for Science and Environment (New Delhi) Anil Agarwal and four villagers of Shimoga and Chikmagalur districts who are said affected by the action of the government in transferring the lands.

The respondents cited in the petition filed on December 9 are Karnataka Government through its Chief Secretary, Karnataka Forest Plantation Corporation Harihar Polyfibers at Kumarapatna (Ranebennur taluk). Karnataka Pulpwood Limited, Bangalore, and the Departments of food and agriculture and environment of the Union Government.

Well-known lawyer Soli Sorabji is the senior counsel and Mr. D.B.Vohra the advocate for the petitioners.

The petitioners have prayed the Supreme Court to declare the Action of the Karnataka government in transferring the vast lands to the Pulpwood Limited as unconstitutional under Articles 14, 21 and 39 (B) of the constitution and restraining the respondents from planting fast-growing species like eucalyptus.

The petitioners have also appealed the Supreme Court to issue directions to the Karnataka government to retransfer the lands back to the revenue department and permanently restore the rights of the villagers to use the lands for common purpose.

It may be mentioned that the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited was set up last year under which fast-growing species like eucalyptus was to be grown in over 80,000 acres in the districts of Dharwad, Shimoga, Chikamagalur, Bellary, Chitradurga and Belgaum.

The Karnataka Government entered into an agreement with the Forest Plantation Corporation and Harihar Polyfibres, a rayon manufacturing unit, following which the vast lands of 'C' and 'D' classes and reserved forest were being transferred to the company. The produce on these lands has to be used as raw materials by the polyfibres for rayon manufacturing.

In their petition, the petitioners have contended

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that the action of the Government would deprive the villagers of the benefits of fodder, fuel, timber, manure fruits etc.` which accrued to them hitherto from these common lands. The new project would also adversely affect the villagers' life and force them to migrate apart from upsetting the ecological balance.

It may be recalled that a public interest litigation was filed last year in the Karnataka High Court by several voluntary organisations and villagers in Dharwad district against the Harihar Polyfibres Factory for causing river and air Pollution by emitting dangerous effluents. The petition had now been transferred from a single judge bench to two-jugde bench of the High Court.

It may also be mentioned that in another petition filed by a voluntary organisation and several villagers of Shimoga, the Karnataka High Court had, on Nov. 25 last, issued orders directing the Deputy Commissioner of Shimoga not to prevent the villagers of Sagar Taluk from using the lands owned by the State and earlier reserved for public use.

The villagers had challenged the action of the Government in preventing them from using the lands for common purpose.

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Mass tree planting in Kusnur village

Express News Service

Hubli, June 23 : Kusnur, a small village in Hangal taluk about 80 km. from here, crossed another milestone in the environmental movement with volunteers of local Hill Area Development Committee and several other organisations launching avenue-tree planting programme recently.

In all 200 shade-giving and utilatarian trees were planted on either side of the 10 km long road between Kusnur and the neighbouring Bytanal village. Severalvolunteers participated in the programme.

The avenue-tree planting programme was planned in

Planting of Avenue trees at Kusnur on 20-6-1988.

place of the pluck-and-plant scheme chalked out earlier. The pluck-and -plant, which aimed at removing eucalyptus trees planted by the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited and planting utilatarian trees, was withdrawn following the government's assurance to voluntary organisations to stop operations of the KPL in Dharwad district and to appoint a one-man committee headed by Dr. Madhav Gadgil to go into the Common Lands issue. The Committee is expected to submit its report in three months.

The volunteers, however, took up this constructive programme of planting avenue-trees to keep up its commitment. Dr. Basa-vaiah, veterinary expert from Bidar, Mr. Basavaraj Hadimani, local Zilla Parishad member and Mr. Veerappa Koutal, editor of *Negila Yogi*, published from Gadag also participated in the programme.

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Marching for 'Pluck and Plant' Satyagraha
Kusnur : Nov. 14th, 1987

Case against govt. for leasing out forest

HUBLI, December 15: A Public interest litigation has Court against the state government by the Samaja Parivarthana Samydaya (formerly known as Transnational centre for non-violent social change) under Article 32 of the Constitution.

The organisation and well-known environmentalist and writer Dr. Shivaram Karnth, have filed the writ petition against leasing out of forest and C and D lands to two private companies for planting eucalyptus and other fast-growing species.s.

The petitioners have sought an interim order nullifying the

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agreements reached between the forest plantation corporation and the Karnataka Pulpwoods limited leasing out 2990 hectares of land and between the government and the Harihar Polyfibres in 1984 leasing out 30,000 hectares of forest and "C and D" lands.

The petition states that the agreements have deprived farmers of their daily needs such as fodder, fuelwood, manure and fruits. The lands leased out are situated near the western ghats and monoculture planting in this sensitive area will adversely affect the ecological balance, it adds.

Mr. S.R.Hiremath, coordinator of the samudaya, told newsmen today that the state government, the Karnataka forest plantation corporation, Harihar Polyfibres, Karnataka Pulpwoods limited, secretary to the food and agriculture department, Union government and secretary to the department of environment, Union government, had been, named respondents. The petition, Mr Hiremath said, would come up for hearing next week. Mr. Soli Sorabjee, former solicitor-general of India would argue the case for the petitioners. The committee for implementing legal aid, New Delhi, had granted a sum of Rs.15,000 to meet the expenses, he added.

The Times of India , Bangalore
16-11-1988

No move for panel to solve Kusnur issue

BANGALORE, July 12: The State Government has no proposal to constitute a committee headed by Dr. Madhav Gadgil to suggest a way out to the controversy between the Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd and the local people of Kusnur village near Hangal on planting eucalyptus saplings.

Mr. G.S.Bagalkot, Minister of State for Forests, who disclosed this to *Deccan Heald*, said that the Government had, however, called for a report from the Dharwar district officers to ascertain whether there was opposition to plant eucalyptus saplings.

Mr. Bagalkot said that the Government had an "open mind" on this issue and if the people opposed the eucalyptus voluntarily, the forest authorities would raise other plants in the area. He said that he was yet to find out whether there were any "vested interests" behind this campaign against eucalyptus cultivation, which he said was lucrative to many farmers.

The villagers of Kusnur have opposed eucalyptus cultivation and started an agitation to remove eucalyptus and plant fruit-bearing trees instead.

Mr. Bagalkot said that the Government, however, would soon set up a five-member committee to go into the encroachment on forests land prior to 1978. The committee comprising the local tahsildar, MLA, RFO, one official and a non-official member would go into the encroachments effected prior to 1978 in Dakshina Kannada, North Kannada and three more districts. On receipt of the committee report, the Government would take steps to regularise these encroachments made by the small farmers and poor people.

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NEWS

Answers required

The manner in which the State Government is responding to the Kusnur agitation will in all likelihood aggravate rather than resolve the situation. The statement on Tuesday by the Minister of State for Forests that there is no proposal to appoint a committee to go into the relevant issues means that in effect the agitation, which has been suspended for the past month, will now resume.

There can be no ambiguity about the sequence of events in this agitation. About 30,000 hectares of forest land in six districts of the State are to be handed over to Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL), a joint sector company set up to raise plantations which will eventually supply raw material to user industries. Since last October the people of Kusnur and other villages in Hangal taluk of Dharwad district have been agitating against KPL's operations. Their concern is that with the development of commercial forestry in the area, they will be deprived of fodder and firewood which they have hitherto obtained from the land earmarked for KPL's plantations.Satyagrahas against KPL's planting operations were planned for June 20 and July 4. On June 3, senior officials of the State Government met with representatives of the Action Committee for Protection of Common Lands in order to resolve the situation. It was agreed then that the Government would appoint Dr. Madhav Gadgil of the Indian Institute of Science as an one-man commission to go into the biomass availability and requirements in the area. It was also agreed that KPL would suspend its operations in Hangal taluk until the Gadgil Commission submitted its report and that the satyagraha would be called off.

While the Action Committee has adhered to this agreement, the Government has not. There has been no formal order suspending KPL's operations in the area. On the contrary, there have been reports that planting operations are continuing as before. Now the Government seems to have decided against the Gadgil Commission as well. It is therefore not surprising that the Kusnur Action Committee has decided to resume the agitation with a satyagraha on August 8.

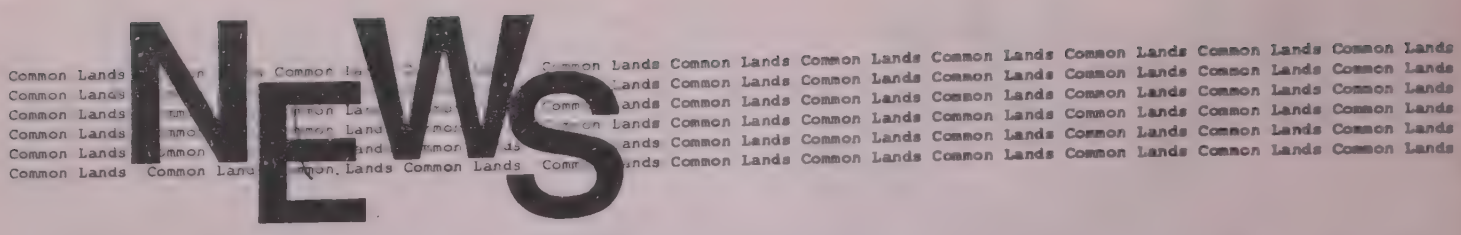
Why has the Government gone back on its earlier decisions? It is not just the people of Kusnur but the public at large which needs answers, for the issues involved are not confined to Kusnur alone. The basic issue raised by the Kusnur agitation is whether the requirements of wood-based industry can be met only at the expense of the biomass needs of rural India. ●●

Villagers sore over Govt. for not keeping promise

(Express News Service)

Bangalore, July 18: A high level official meeting has been convened in Bangalore on Tuesday to review the Government's stand on the operations of the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL) following fresh threats, from villagers in Dharwad district to launch a satyagraha on the issue.

The call for satyagraha on



August 8, Quit India Day, has been given by the villagers of Kusnur taluk and the non-governmental organisations who have been agitating on the issue of common lands for a year now.

On June 3 the authorities had persuaded the villagers at a meeting to call off their "pluck and plant" satyagraha scheduled for June 20 with the assurance that they would immediately appoint a one-man commission under Dr. Madhav Gadgil and also order suspensions of KPL's operations in Dharwad district. But this has not been done so far and the villagers feel they have been taken for a ride.

The Guddanadu Abhirudhi Samithi of Kusnur and the Action Committee on the Protection of Common Lands supported by the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya have brought to the notice of the Government the large-scale planting operation by KPL in Hangal taluk in violation of the agreement reached between the people and the Government.

Dr. Madhav Gadgil told ENS he had no intimation from the Government about hearing the commission. He said he had only read about it in the newspapers.

Chief Secretary A. B. Datar admitted to ENS that there had been "some delay" in fulfilling the assurances but the matter would be reviewed at the meeting on Tuesday.

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Perjury case against state govt.

By A Staff Reporter BANGALORE, July 22:

The Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, a voluntary organsation based in Dharwad, has filed a contempt of court petition in the Supreme Court against the government of Karnataka and 12 persons, including top officials of the state forest department, Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd., (KPL) and the Harihar Polyfibres regarding alleged transfer of common lands to the KPL by the government despite a court stay in the matter.

The petitioners Dr K. Shivaram Karanth, noted writer, and others of the voluntary body argued that the government transferred 14,805.92 hectares (37,000 acres) of land to the KPL through an order of September 2,1987. This, they stated, was despite a stay by the Supreme Court on March 24 that year in the case.

The petition was filed on July 18, according to Mr S.R.Hiremath and Mr Dileep Kamath, co-ordinator and vice-president, respectively, of the Samudaya. They told reporters here today that over five lakh villagers were likely tobeaffectedby the government's decision to grow eucalyptus in about 75,000 acres of land covering Shimoga, Dharwad, Belgaum, Chikmagalur, Hassan and Uttara Kannada districts.

They claimed that the KPL, a joint sector venture of the state government and the Harihar Polyfibres, had taken up the eucalyptus plantation in full swing despite stiff opposition to it from the villagers.

NEWS

After appeals to the state chief minister and other authorities concerned, the environmental group approached the court in December 1986 and the court gave a stay in March, 1987. By this time, according to the government, about 3,500 hectares of land had been transferred to the KPL. The eucalyptus grown in the area was for the captive consumption of the Harihar Polyfibres unit situated at Kumarapatnam in Dharwad district.

The petitioners said transfer of land took place while the Supreme Court was conducting the final hearing in January and February, 1988. The government kept the Supreme Court in the dark about the transfer of land. The government argued that only 1,000 acres of C and D land and 7,900 acres of degraded forest land had been leased and the balance of 66,100 acres had not been identified for allocation. This, the petitioners asserted, was at variance with what was actually happening. The order of September 9, 1988, had identified land for the purpose.

The Petitioners stated that the KPL had approached the court to vacate the stay order on the basis that the expenses incurred in raising nurseries would cause irreparable damage to the joint sector body. But the court, while refusing to vacate the stay, decided to allow the state to allot 3,000 hectares of C and D class land. This was done by the court when it did not know the transfer of over 14,000 hectares in flagrant violation of the stay order, the petitioners argued.

While praying the court to initiate contempt proceedings against the 12 persons, the petitioners requested the court to award an adequate compensation to the villagers affected.

The respondents cited in the petition besides the government of Karnataka, are: Mr. S. Shyamasunder, Principal Chief Conservator of State forests, Mr S. Parameshwarappa, chief conservator of Forests (general) Mr. H. P. Vishwanathan, Managing Director, Karnataka Forest Development Corporation, Mr B.S.Patil, Secretary, Animal Husbandry, Forest and Fisheries, Government of Karnataka, Mr N.S.Adkili, joint managing director, Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd., Mr S.K.Jain, Executive President Harihar Polyfibres, Mr K.Hiriyana, Under Secretary, Animal Husbandary Forest and Fisheries, Government of Karnataka, Ms Nirmal Chainani, Vice-President, Harihar Polyfibres New Delhi, Mr A.B.Datar, Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka and Mr T.R.Satish Chandran, Former Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka.

The petitioners have also filed case of perjury against the state government, Mr Hiriyana and Ms Nirmal Chainani alleging that they had deliberately lied in their counter affidavits in the case before the court.

The Times of India,
Bangalore, July 29, 1988.

NEWS

Kusnur: Case filed in SC against Govt.

Express News Service

Bangalore, July 21: A major contempt case, the first of its kind in the country on the issue of common lands, has been filed in the Supreme Court by Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS), a Dharwad-based environment group.

The case filed on July 18 is a sequel to the public interest litigation filed by SPS chairman Shivaram Karanth and others in December 1986 against the operations of the joint sector company, the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL). Despite the stay order issued by the Supreme Court on March 24, 1987, the KPL had continued its operations with the help of the State Government and hence the contempt case, SPS president S.R.Hiremath told newsmen here on Thursday.

The application for initiating contempt proceeding against 12 contemners includes among others Mr. Sham Sundar, Chief Conservator of Forests, KPL Managing Director N.S.Adkoli, Mr. S.K.Jain, Executive President of Harihar Polyfibres, State Chief Secretary A.B.Datar, former Chief Secretary Satish Chandran and Secretary, Animal Husbandry, Forest and Fisheries, B. S. Patil. The petition says that they are "guilty of deliberately suppressing material facts and obstructing the course of justice before the Supreme Court", while seeking vacation of its interim order. Land was being transferred even while the Supreme Court was conducting the final hearings in January and February this year.

The SPS has also filed a perjury case against Mr. K. Hiriyana, and Ms. Nirmal Chainani, Vice President (Dev) of Harihar Polyfibres for allegedly lying before the Supreme Court about the extent of land transferred when they were in full know ledge of the exact nature of transfer. The petitioners have appealed to the court to initiate criminal proceedings against the two under the Criminal Procedure Code.

Meanwhile villagers of Kusnur in Dharwad are planning to go ahead with their "the pluck and plant" satyagraha on Aug.8 following the Government's failure to appoint the Madhav Gadgil Commission and issue orders staying the KPL operations in the State.

Indian Express,
Bangalore July 23, 1988

Pluck and plant stir planned from Monday

Hubli, Aug. 6: The villagers of Kusnur in Hangal taluk and the surrounding villages have decided to resume their "Pluck and Plant" (Kittiko-Hachchiko) agitation from Monday.

The local Hill Areas Development Committees (Guddagadu Abhivruddhi Samiti) of Kusnur, Somasagar and Herur villages have given the call for the agitation to protest the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL), a company set up by the State Government in collaboration with the Birla-owned factories of Harihar Polyfibres and Grasim at Kumarpattnam a border village of Dharwad

district.

The Government has handed over about 75,000 acres of 'C' and 'D' class lands, degraded forests etc. to the twin factories for cultivating eucalyptus to be used as raw-materials for the production of rayon cloth. The lands have been acquired in Dharwad, Shimoga, Belgaum, Chikmagalur,Hassan and Uttar Kannada districts.

The Samiti leaders contend that the huge project had deprived the villagers of their land on which they depended for fuel, fodder, timber and other raw materials for earning their livelihood. They have demanded that the lands acquired by the KPL should be handed over to the villages for common use.

The KPL, meanwhile, has gone ahead with its programme of planting eucalyptus and over 30,000 acres including those in Kusnur and the neighbouring villages in Dharwad district have been covered.

On Monday, the villagers will remove the eucalyptus trees planted by the KPL and plant utilitarian trees in their place. The people of Kusnur and neighbouring Hirebasur, had observed a similar satyagraha on Nov. 14 last year, and these trees have been growing along with the eucalyptus trees.

Messrs Doddamani and Hiremath, Samiti leaders, told newsmen here that the villagers were compelled to resume their agitation as the KPL operations continued despite the people's resistance. The Samiti, they said, had decided to restore the lands to the villagers.

The leaders of various voluntary organisations, like the Dharwad-based Parivartana Samudaya, Citizens for Democracy and the Tungabhadra Environment Committee of Ranebennur, have expressed support for the agitation. The KPL, they said was violating the Supreme Court's stay order following a petition submitted by several environmentalists led by noted Kannada writer and Jnanapith award winner Dr. Shivaram Karanth.

They said that the State had transferred about 37,000 acres of land to the KPL even after the Supreme Court had issued the stay order and filed a petition on grounds of contempt of Court. The Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangalore, the present and former Chief secretaries to the State and several other officials of the concerned departments and as well as top executives of Harihar Polyfibres, have been accused of violating the order.

Dr. S.L.Pawar of Ranebennur Environmental Committee, Dilip Kamath, Ranjan Raoy.erdoor and Mr. Hiremath of Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, also accused the State of going back on its recent promise to constitute a committee under Environmentalist Dr. Madhav Gadgil to go into the KPL issue. The Government had also not directed the KPL to stop its operations, until the committee gave its report. It was following this assurance that the 'pluck and plant' agitation planned earlier had been called off.

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NEWS

March for clean air halted

KUSUR (Dharwar district), Aug. 9. Revenue and police officials of Dharwar district on Monday prevented a batch of peaceful satyagrahis from offering satyagraha in a novel "pluk out and plant" agitation of removing eucalyptus plants and replacing them with fruit bearing saplings.

After unsuccessfully trying to prevail upon the organisers to give up the programme, the police allowed the satyagrahis to take out a procession to the venue, but took them into preventive custody halfway through their march.

The entire proceedings, which were video-taped were watched among others by Mr. H.S.Doreswamy, Chairman, Gandhi Peace Foundation Karnataka, Mr. K.S.Sharma president, Federation of State Government Daily Wages Employees,Mr.Suresh Heblikar cine artiste, several envrionmentalists and representatives of different environment groups and voluntary organisations.

The agitation was in protest against eucalyptus cultivation, and in particular against the Government action of alienating common land, including degraded forests for eucalyptus cultivation by the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited a joint sector company with the Birla-owned Harihar Polyfibres with the Forest Department. The propriety of the Government in transferring land to KPL has been questioned in a writ petition before the Supreme Court by litterateur and Jnanapith award winner, Dr. Shivaram Karanath and others.

Kusnur, a village nestling amid verdant settings has been the focal point of the agitation which has been going on for quite some time. The village, surrounded by hillocks where eucalyptus plantation under the aegis of the Karnataka Pulpwoods Limited have come up, lies about 28 km away from Haveri on the Poona Bangalore National Highway. It was here that first pluck out and plant agitation was launched in November 1987.

The call for agitation, which was given by the newly formed Guddanadu Abhivriddhi Samiti (hill area development committee) had come aout under interesting Circumstances. First it was claimed that some more land had been transferred through a Government Order in spite of a stay by the Supreme Court in the matter to the KPL Secondly, the Government reneged on an understanding arrived at a meeting convened in June under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary to the State Government for study by a specially appointed one-man commission headed by Dr. Madhav Gadgil and to suspend operations of the KPL in Dharwar district till the committee's report was available.

The Deputy Commissioner ofthedistrict Mr. R.G.Nadadur with a retinue of revenue officials reached the village, Mr Jyoti Prakash Mirji, Superintendent of Police, landed with a posse of policemen. While the organisers of the agitation briefed the participants on the nature of the satyagraha, the official machinery started moving. Mr. Mahendra Jain, Assistant Commissioner, Savanur Sub-Division told the

organisers that the Government had viewed the situation seriouly and it had been decided not to allow the satyagrahis to pluck out eucalyptus.

The organisers reiterated that the movement would be a peaceful one and promised to adhere to 100 satyagrahis going over to pluck 100 plants and replace them with same number of utilitarian saplings. They also volunteered to ad- here to the time scheme for the satyagraha.

The authorities conceded after talks among themselves and the satyagrahis began their march by shouting slogans and carrying placards to the venue located about 3 km away. They were followed at a distance by members of a peace brigade formed by the organisers.

The buoyant satyagrahis on their way stopped at a place on the outskirts of village to pick up saplings of utilitarian trees, specially raised for the occasion and took a pledge that they would participate in the satyagraha.

Taken by surprise: But before they reached their destination about a km away, the police asked the satyagrahis to wait for the Deputy Commissioner to come and they obliged. Suddenly the police surrounded them and the Deputy Commissioner who had arrived by then sent a messsage through the Assistant Commissioner that they would not be permitted to proceed further and that all of them would be taken into preventive custody. Their request to proceed further and carry out satyagraha before courting arrest was rejected.The Satyagrahis walked with saplings in their hand into the waiting buses. Among those who courted arrest included eight women. They were taken to Aadur police station. However, they were released in the evening.

Struggle will go on:- Mr. Ranjan Rao Yeaddor, a representative of the organisers felt that the police and revenue officials must have been under terrible pressure to take action. He regretted that officials had gone back on their promise. "Our struggle will go on" he told newspersons.

After the arrests, others who remained at the village condemned the police action and raised slogans denouncing the Government and the district administration for acting as " agents of the Karnataka Pulpwoods".

Mr. Mahendra Jain, when approached by presspersons was tightlipped.

To a query, he said there had been no technical violation of any law by the satyagrahis and that the arrests were of preventive nature apprehending breach of peace.

' Pluck & Plant' stir begins today

DHARWAD, AUG. 7 : The villagers of Kusnur in Hanagal taluk near here will launch their 'pluck & plant' agetation tomorrow. According to the reports reaching here the local hill areas development committees of Kusnur, Somsagar and Herur villages have given a call for the agitation to protest against the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL), a company set up by the State Government in collaboration with the Birla owned factories of Harihar Polyfibres and Grasim at Kumarpattanam, a border village in Dharwad district. The agitating farmers are opposing the Government's move of handing over about 75,000 acres of 'C' and 'D' class lands .

Newslink News service

Memorandum to Shri. Ramakrishna Hegde, Chief Minister, Govt. of Karnataka.

Dear Sri. Hegde,

This memorandum is being addressed to you on behalf of over 5,00,000 people affected by the decision of the Government of Karnataka to form the Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd., (KPL) on November 14, 1984. The organizations of the affected people are joined by the Voluntary Organizations from various remote parts of Karnataka including some from outside the State in writing this memorandum expressing our serious concern against the KPL, in particular and the industrial and forest policy of the Government, in general. These voluntary organizations have a record of working closely with the rural poor on issues of social justice and whose membership consists of doctors, lawyers, engineers and scientists committed to the cause of the poor.

The KPL, as you know, was formed as a joint sector company, by the Karnataka Forest Plantations Corporation and the Harihar Polyfibers, a unit of Gwalior Rayon Silk Manufacturing Company Ltd., (GRASIM) and the sole purpose of this company is to grow eucalyptus and other fast growing species on over 75,000 acres of common lands of villagers for the captive consumption of the Harihar Polyfibers, as the raw material. This has affected very adversely over 5 lakhs of rural people especially the poor in over four districts of Dharwad, Shimoga, Chickmagalur and Belgaum who have, for generations, depended on these lands for their basic needs of fodder for cattle, fuel for cooking, raw material for artisans, green leaves for manure, fruits and small timber for housing.

As you are perhaps aware, we have been systematically exploring the various avenues open to concerned citizens and organizations to study the problem, to facilitate the organizing of the affected people through local voluntary agencies and express the concern of the people, some prominent citizens and voluntary organizations to the

concerned government representatives and the judiciary.

To summerise the major efforts, we first came to know about the formation of KPL as a joint sector company at an estimated cost of Rs. 30 Crores, in the *Indian Expres* of October 27, 1984. From a copy of the agreement dated Novvember 14, 1984, we were concerned to know that over 75,000 acres of common lands of villages in five forest divisions in Shimoga (Sagar, Bhadrawati and Shimoga) and Chikmagalur, districts (Chikmagalur and Koppa divisions) and 51 percent of the equity comes from the Government of Karnataka. This factual information was shared with the affected people who have organized themselves into village committees and also at broader level. Many of these groups have submitted memorandums to the local revenue and forest officials.

We also brought this to the attention of prominent persons concerned about the public issues of this nature e.g. Dr.K.Shivaram Karanth, Gnan Peeth Award Winner, who wrote major articles in the *Kannada Prabha* and the *Prajavani* of 29-12-1984 about this issue. He warned the people of Karnataka about growing friendship between the Government of Karnataka and the Birla industry, Harihar Polyfibres, a highly polluting industry, resulting in the formation of the KPL. He unequivocally said it is harmful to the ecology and environment and also to the nation. He called upon the people of Karnataka to totally oppose this friendship between the Birlas and the Government and the resulting joint sector company.

Similarly other prominent people in Karnataka and outside such as Sri.

Kadidal Manjappa, former Chief Minister of Karnataka, Sri. D.M.Chandrasekhar, former Chief Justice of High Court of Karnataka, Sri.V.M.Tarkunde, Noted Jurist and Civil Libertarian have all through letter and press statements, appealed to your government to cancel this agreement and for a people-oriented forest policy to help meet peoples' basic needs.

On March 28, 1985, representatives of leading Volun-

tary Agencies, Gandhians, Environmentalists, Journalists and Farmers' Organizations in Karnataka wrote a comprehensive memorandum to you, under the auspices of the Mannu Rakshana Koota, Bangalore requesting the cancellation of the KPL agreement and also offering to work with the government in the fields of social forestry and Wasteland Development to help the rural people, especially the poor, meet their basic needs by regenerating the wastelands. This memorandum also included a request to cancel another related project called Farm Forestry Projects involving 45,000 acres of lands in four districts within 100 km. radius of the factory. This project envisaged granting of these lands at the rate of 1 hectare per year for seven years, to the rural poor who have to grow only eucalyptus on this land and sell the same to Harihar Polyfibres at a "reasonable rate". We came to know that as a result of bad publicity this received in the press, this latter scheme was dropped. However, we did not hear anything from you about the KPL.

Since April 1985, we have met your Forest Ministers four times under the initiative and leadership of Sri.D.M.Chandrasekhar and have urged them to cancel the KPL and also to make Social Forestry people-oriented. All these efforts have not yielded any results so far, except some minor changes in Social Forestry Policy.

We also met with you, under the leadership of Sri. Kadidal Manjappa and Sri D.M.Chandrasekhar, on August 12, 1985. All the members of the delegation including Sri. Manjappa and Chandrasekhar explained to you how the KPL would adversely affect several lakhs of people as far as their basic needs of fodder, fuel etc., are concerned. While we appreciated your giving patient hearing to what we had to say, we were disappointed that no measures were taken to help the affected people.

After exploring all the avenues of persuading the government officials and peoples' representatives including protest memorandums, we had to approach the court for redressal. The farmers of Sagar taluka filed a case in the High Court of Karnataka. We were most heartened when the High Court issued an interim order to the Deputy Commissioner of Shimoga to see that the villagers continue to

have access to these common lands and enjoy the usufructs. It was an important judicial victory for the affected people.

However, your Government, instead of supporting the cause of the people, signed a new lease aggreement on July 15, 1986, handing over common lands including reserve forest, minor forest and protected forest lands to KPL in Dharwad and Belgaum areas in addition to Shimoga and Chickmagalur areas. Also attempts were made to evict people from the lands surveyed for giving them to KPL e.g., Agradahalli and Jattikere villages in Shimoga district. The people who had organized themselves have been systematically protesting these attempts of the government. Many other organizations like the Raita Sangha have been part of these organized protests resulting in putting up signboards at the entrance to village that all the land in the villages belonged to people of villages and that the government officials must take the permission of the villagers before entering the villages. In some other cases, the stones demarked for evicting people have been uprooted by the distressed villagers.

Disappointed by the inaction of the Government so far, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the formation of KPL on November 14, 1986, there were protests in six districts by thousands of landless labourers and farmers. The largest protests to the KPL scheme came from the affected people in Shimoga, Dharwad and Chickmagalur districts. A joint public statment was issued by Sri. Kadidal Manjappa, former Chief Minister, Sri. D.M.Chandrasekhar, former Chief Justice and Sri. A.R.Badrinarayan, former Education Minister. Protest memorandums and letters were sent from the Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangh, the Mannu Rakshana Koota, Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, and many other organizations in Karnataka. Also, concerned individuals and organizations from various parts of the country also wrote to the Government of Karnataka protesting eg., Sri. M.D.Mistry of DISHA from Gujarat, Sri.A.V.Swamy of VISWAS from Orissa and Sri. R.S.Chauhan of GRAM, New Delhi.

This weeklong protest of affected people and letters

from prominent people in Karnataka and outside did not seem to have any effect on your government. Also your moving from places where people protested effectively (e.g. Sagar) to other areas concerned us very much.

All this made us to go to the highest court of the land, Supreme Court of India, under the leadership of Dr. K. Shivaram Karanth. A major public interest litigation was filed by the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya against KPL and the Government of Karnataka in the Supreme Court of India on December 9, 1986. The petitioners included in addition to Dr. Karanth, and SPS, the affected farmers from the concerned districts and also the well known Environmentalist Sri. Anil Agrawal of the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, S.R.Ramaswamy, and S.R.Hiremath of SPS. We appreciate the token financial support we received from the Committee for Implementing Legal Aid Schemes (CILAS) of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi.

This common lands issue and the widespread and sustained movement of the people of Karnataka for restoration and retention of control over the village common lands has received unprecedented coverage in the press, both national and international. This has certainly contributed to the mobilizing of public opinion against the KPL. In fact, in the Legislative Assembly, peoples' representatives from all parties have expressed their concern about this issue and called upon the government to cancel this KPL agreement.

On March 28, 1987, the affected people and the organizations supporting them were very gratified when the Supreme Court issued a stay order to maintain the status quo thereby preventing further transfer of lands to the KPL. This helped the affected people feel that the judiciary can help them and organize themselves to maintain their control over the common lands.

However, the hopes of the people affected and all others were proved wrong as soon as the KPL started planting operations on a much larger scale, preventing local people from grazing, threatening to shoot them if their

cattle entered the village common lands used for grazing for generations, spraying the plants with dangerous pesticides and working with the policy to harass and even arrest villagers trying to organize themselves to protect their common lands. They wrote protest letters to the Deputy Commissioner and other authorities.

If the very government, which is to protect to peoples' rights and enforce court decisions, does not perform its functions and on the contrary, encourages the KPL to increase its planting operations immensely, what can the affected people do?

After detailed discussions among the affected people from Dharwad, Belgaum and Shimoga districts it was decided that the time has come for people to take to symbolic Satyagraha (direct action), guided by the principles of truth and non-violence.

The affected people joined by their supporters from across the State have planned to assemble in Kusnur village (Hangal taluka, Dharwad district) on November 14, 1987, the third anniversary of the formation of KPL. The people will take the Oath of non-violence and truth and symbolically uproot 100 eucalyptus trees on the common lands of Kusnur taken over by KPL. More importantly, the people will plant in their place 100 trees of fodder, fruit, fuel, etc., which meet their basic needs. The affected people and their supporters will water these plants until the next mansoon, thereby signifying their responsibility and committment to, not only protest what is evil but also take responsibility to do what is right and sustain it.

We all strongly felt that before we take these first steps of Satyagraha on November 14, 1987, we should appeal to the conscience of the government one more time to cancel the KPL agreement, thereby avoiding unnecessary confronation between the people and their government. We are most hopeful that you will appreciate our stand and the efforts that we have done as delineated in this memorandum since the formation of KPL three years ago and take urgent steps to cancel the KPL agreement.

LETTERS

May we request you to let us know by November 10, 1987 ? (Please inform

Dr.S.L.Pawar, Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, Ranibennur-581 115).

We look forward to hearing from you.

S.R.Ramaswamy,
President,
Samaj Parivartana Samudaya,
"Ashadeep", Jayanagar Cross,
Saptapur,
Dharwad-580 001.

S.L.Pawar
Coordinator
November 14, Programme,
Near Post Office,
Ranibennur-581 115

Towards Total Destruction of Forests

Reports have appeared in news papers that the Karnataka Government is floating a public company called "Karnataka Pulpwood Limited". Government is to invest 51% of the share capital, M/s Harihar Polyfibres 29% and the rest is to be raised by public subscription. This composition itself indicates the soft corner that the Government has developed towards Harihar Polyfibres.

This move is dangerous for two reasons.

(1) First, for years the Harihar Polyfibres factory has been recklessly releasing untreated effluents into the Tungabhadra river, posing a continuous hazard to the survival of villagers. Fishermen have been adversely affected because of depletion of fish. Earlier this year (1984) there have been fishkills due to continued release of foul water. Even though water-treatment plants have been installed, the factory habitually releases untreated water into the river. Numerous complaints have been sent to the Government, but officials have taken no action. While it has amply been proved that the fish died (e.g. on 14-2-1981) for want of oxygen, the officials (of the State Pollution Control Board) have been siding with the errant factory by saying that the treatment plant did not work due to failure of electricity!

A similar factory owned by the same industrial house of the Birlas has been causing enormous pollution in Mavoor in Kerala. People there, after prolonged struggle, have obtained court orders restraining the factory from letting untreated water into the river. Yet another factory of the Birlas in Nagda (Madhya Pradesh) has also been causing pollution claiming many lives.

Affected people in Dharwad District (Karnataka) have gone to court in Haveri and are awaiting redressal and compensation.

(2) Secondly, Government had in the beginning itself

made ample forests available to meet the needs of the Harihar Polyfibres factory, and the quantity was generously enhanced by the Devaraj Urs ministry. As if even that is not enough, the present Karnataka Government (headed by Sri Ramakrishna Hegde) has moved to extend further support to the industry.

Our forests are already depleted. Mysore Paper Mills in Bhadravati have denuded bamboo forests in Malnad; West Coast Paper Mills in Dandeli (North Kanara) have totally erased the rich forests and are now getting their wood supplies from Tamil Nadu, Orissa and elsewhere.

Despite this, and though the Government is unable to meet the basic small-timber and fuel needs of the rural people, Government has now set out to supply some 200,000 tonnes of wood annually to the new enterprise.

Such captive plantations are obviously against the interests of the common people. The new enterprise (Karnataka Pulpwood Limited) will not only further denude the State's forests, but will also result in further damage to the health of the people by polluting river water.

Representatives of people and well-wishers of Karnataka should resist this unholy alliance of the Government with the industry.

Dr. Shivaram Karanth
Chairman,
Environmental Study and Action Committee TNC.

Translated from *Kannada Prabha*, 29-12-1984.

LETTERS

Government's Pro-Industry Stance

(We produce below the translation of a letter written by Dr. Shivaram Karanth, distinguished man of letters, to the Chief Minister of Karnataka.

Dr. Karanth is Chairman of the Environment Study and Action Committee of TNC.)

April 24,1985

To
Sri Ramakrishna Hegde,
Honourable Chief Minister of Karnataka,
Vidhana Soudha,
Bangalore

Dear Sir,

From recent reports, it appears to us that your Government has taken a hurried decision to enter into a partnership with the Birla industries. The Government's eagerness to favour the industry is evident from the fact that the (farm forestry) scheme was ordered within a month of the (Legislative Assembly) Elections. We feel that these steps adversely affect the interests of the people, and may cause permanent ecological damage.

The Devaraj Urs Government has allotted more wood to this industry than needed. I was at the time informed of it by the then ministerial aid Sri Guttal. In response to the industry's offer to invest, you appear to be bent on selling away more forest resources.

In your statement (in the Legislature) you have said eucalyptus would not be grown in areas with a rainfall of more than 60". Eucalyptus can grow in areas with a rainfall of as little as 6" ! In our reckoning, 60" constitutes good or heavy rainfall.

I fail to see the reason for your extraordinary partiality for the Birla industry which has been callously

polluting the (Tungabhadra) river and which has already grown to gigantic proportions.

Is Harihar Polyfibres the only industry in this country? What programmes do you have for the other industries, and for the supply of much-needed fuelwood and timber to the common people?

The unseemly hurry evinced by your Government in these recent measures is public knowledge and has caused widespread concern. I am personally apprehensive that the Government's favouring one or two industries will be harmful to the State's interests.

I do not presume to be competent to advise you, but have been compelled to convey my reaction to you.

Yours sincerely

Shivaram Karanth

A Letter from Gujarat

DISHA
Himatnagar, Gujarath
28th November 1986

To,

Sri Ramakrishna Hegde,
Chief Minister, Karnataka.

We have just come across the appeal of the people of Sagar, Shimoga, Bhadravati, Koppa and Chikmagalur talukas of Karnataka, and have been disturbed considerably by the content of the appeal in which it is mentioned that the Forest Department plans to grow eucalyptus and other varieties of pulpwood species, for a joint-sector company 'Karnataka Pulpwood Limited'.

Gujarat is considered as a model in social forestry, but it has yet to prove that the programme helps in raising the income of the poor. Most of the eucalyptus plantation is done by the individual farmers at the inastance of Forest Department, depriving landless people of the income. Planting of eucalyptus on hills in tribal areas has deprived the poorest sections of society from the available income and food at their doorsteps, and has led to increase in migration. Eucalyptus plantation without irrigation is non-profitable, and if encouraged, private plantation will create a wide gap between the poor themselves.

We demand that the Forest Department must abandon the idea of planting fast-growing species on such a massive amount of land, which would deprive the people from access to common land, simply to support industry, which in no way helps the poorest of the area.

We hope that you would take due notice and appreciate our feeling and concern regarding the issue.

M. D. MISTRY

Managing Director

Vivekananda Institute of Social Work and Allied Services (VISWAS)

Kalanivas,
Khariar Road-766 104
Kalahandi (ORISSA)

To,

Sri Ramakrishna Hegde,
Chief Minister,
Government of Karnataka
Bangalore-560 001

We learn with shock and amazement that the State Government under your stewardship is embarking upon the most damaging alliance with Harihar Polyfibres/Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd. that would damage 75,000 acres of forest land and the livelihood of thousands of tribals besides creating a permanent ecological imbalance in that region.

We are greatly hopeful and urge your kind intervention in rescinding the contract and save the environment as well as the livelihood of tribals.

A. V. SWAMY

Secretary

LETTERS

(We reproduce below the text of an order by the Government of India to all the State Forest Departments, bearing on the subject of granting lands to industries for captive plantations. --Ed.)

Government of India
Ministry of Environment & Forests

Telegram : PARYAVARAN
NEW DELHI
Paryavaran Bhavan, C.G.O. Complex,
Lodi Road, New Delhi-110 003

No. 2-3 /86-F July 29, 1987 / 3rd August, 1987

To,

The Secretary to the Government of . . .
Forest Department.

Subject:- Use of forest land for raising plantations for raw material for industries by private industries/ individuals.

Sir,

This Ministry has been receiving proposals from the State Government/Union Territories for allowing private industries, institutions and individual farmers to raise plantations on forest lands for production of raw materials for industries, either on a lease basis or as a joint-sector programme with the State Forest Department/State Forest Development Corporation.

2. I am directed to inform you that so far as forest areas are concerned, the Government of India do not propose to permit any such plantation by industries either by themselves or as a joint-sector programme.

3. No proposal, seeking approval for such a purpose either on a lease or joint-sector project basis will, therefore be entertained and such proposals will not be approved under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. If any such cases have been cleared without the prior approval of the Government of India after coming into force of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, these leases may please be cancelled.

4. Arrangements may, however, be made to enable the small and marginal farmers to produce raw materials for industries on degraded lands available with them.

Yours faithfully,
Sd/
(T. N. Seshan)
Secretary to the Government of India

Copy to :' 1. Chief Conservator of Forests ...(State/Union Territory) 2. Conservator of Forests (Central) Regional Office...Region ... All Ministers of the Government of India; Member Secretary, National Wastelands Development Board, New Delhi

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Karnataka State Farmers' Association
(KARNATAKA RAJYA RAITA SANGHA)

Gen. Secretary
Babugowda Patil

1376/33, 11 Main,
1st cross, Sadashivnagar
Belgaum 590 001
17th November, 1986

To,

Sri Ramakrishna Hegde
Chief Minister of Karnataka
Vidhana Soudha, Bangalore

Farmers of different regions held meetings on 14th November 1986 and expressed concern about the proliferation of eucalyptus. They have protested against the Karnataka Government's decision to grant a 40-year lease to Karnataka Pulpwood Limited over an extent of 75,000 acres of land. On behalf of the farmers of the State, we urge you to annul the above lease.

Babugowda Patil

LETTERS

Grams:"FREEDOM" Phone:80430

Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS)

"ASHADEEP", JAYANAGAR CROSS, SAPTAPUR,
DHARWAD-580 001, KARNATAKA, INDIA

No.252/SPS-32/88

Ranjan Rao Yerdoor,
Secretary,
Samaj Parivartana Samudaya
(SPS)
Guruvayankere-574 217,
Dakshin Kannada Dist.

Shri.S.Shyam Sunder,
Principal Chief
Conservator of Forest,
"Aranya Bhavan",
18th Cross, Malleshwaram,
Bangalore-560 003.

June 13, 1988

Dear Shri. Shyam Sunder,

Sub: Violations of Supreme Court Stay Order and other matters regarding Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL).

When my colleagues and I met with you and other officials on June 3, 1988 in the Chamber of the Chief Secretary, we wanted to discuss some important matters regarding the Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd., (KPL). Since the time was very limited and major focus was on the forthcoming Satyagrahas in Kusnur and Hirebasur, we did not have an opportunity to bring these matters to the kind attention of you and other senior- most officials of the Government.

As we mentioned in the meeting, there is a serious communication gap regarding the problems arising from KPL operations, primarily due to lack of information and government orders. My colleague Sri. S.R.Hiremath mentioned about this in the meeting and we wrote about it in our joint letter to the Chief Secretary dated 5-6-1988, a copy of which was sent to you.

We would like to share some important information that we have learnt and request you, as the Head of the Forest Department, to take effective action to remedy the situation. The following are some of the matters that have come to our notice:

1) Violations of the Supreme Court Stay Order:

As you know, the Supreme Court issued the Stay Order on 24-3-1987 in response to the Writ Petition filed (W.P.35 of 1987) by Dr.Shivaram Karanth, the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya and others against the KPL and others to maintain the status quo with regard to the possession of

land. However, we have come to know that a major government order was issued by the Chief Conservator of Forests (Gen) on September 2, 1987 in violation of the Stay Order of the Supreme Court. This order of 2-9-1987, we have learnt, involves transfer of nearly 15,000 hectares of forest land in Shimoga, Dharwad and Belgaum Circles. As this constitutes an important violation of the Stay Order of the Supreme Court by your department, we urge you to look into the matter immediately and take appropriate action. We would also like to know whether any lands which were planted by the KPL during the 1987 monsoon were transferred after the Supreme Court Stay Order.

2) Problems of local villagers caused by operations of KPL on lands not given to them:

The villagers of Hulgaddi, a village close to Kusnur in Hangal taluka, have shown us their letter of June 1, 1987 (A copy enclosed) addressed to the Forest Minister, the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Dharwad and also a copy of the letter of the MLA of Hangal taluka to the District Forest Officer (A copy enclosed) about the KPL having cut down the sandalwood and matti trees on their gomal land (Survey No. 112 and 113 with an area of 65 acres and 16 guntas) which has not been turned over to KPL. They have also further complained that the water channels from the forest and gomal areas leading to their irrigation tank have been damaged by the bulldozing operations of KPL and this has cut off supply of water to their irrigation tank, hence causing hardship due to non-availability of water for irrigation. The villagers of Uppunshi and Guddadamulatalli have told us about the bulldozing of their village common lands in Hangal taluka which, upon enquiry, we found have not been handed over to the KPL by the Forest or Revenue Officials (S.No.36, 72, 75/1 in Uppunashi and 134, 135, 54, and 102 in Guddadmulatalli). These are only some of the situations that we have come across about the harassment of the local people which has seriously affected their livelihood, including lack of access to the forest areas for their fodder and fuel needs.

3) Violations of the conditions of the agreement:

We have seen through our experience of working in the Kusnur group of villages and other areas in Dharwad District and elsewhere that the conditions of the agreement have been violated. Following are some examples:

i) The traditional valuable trees have been cut down. This has happened extensively in Kusnur and Kulawalli areas and we were able to even photograph some of the

logs of these trees being carried away and in some situations villagers have also brought it to the attention of the Forest Officials, as the enclosed letter of villagers of Hulgaddi confirms (They have also complained about the KPL cutting down sandalwood and matti trees in the forest lands (Survey No.107, 108, 109, and 110) in addition to the Gomal area (Survey No.112 and 113).

ii) In no place in Dharwad and Belgaum districts where KPL has been given lands, we have seen any fodder species at all, violating the condition that 5% of plantations should be fodder-cum-fuel species.

iii) The tree-growth in almost all places has been certainly more than 2 tons per acre before KPL operations began, as these have been traditionally good forest areas, many having valued species like Sandalwood, teak and matti.

In most cases, KPL has begun its operations by cutting down trees and bulldozing the areas. The villagers of Hirebasur and Byagawadi have told us that even plantations done by the Forest Department in Hirebasur area were cut down by KPL and bulldozed and some of the villagers, they told us, did panchanama about this incident for the local forest officials, perhaps in the middle of 1986. These lands have supported valuable trees and even now we see an acre of good growth of teak trees in the Hirebasur Forest land in the hill slopes amidst KPL plantations of eucalyptus.

iv) There has been no attempt either by the KPL or the Forest Officials to explain to the villagers that the agreement has a condition that the rights and privileges of villagers will not be eliminated. On the contrary, there have been many instances where the grazing of the cattle by villagers has been prevented by the KPL and their animals and belongings confiscated. Some villagers have written to the Deputy Commissioner about this matter.

The details of these above situations of villagers were shared during the National Seminar on Common Lands held in Dharwad in November 1987 for which we had invited you. As you could not come due to short notice, you were kind enough to send your colleagues from Bangalore and Dharwad. In this seminar, the villagers from the various KPL-affected areas of Dharwad, Belgaum and Shimoga districts met directly with the Forest Officials who did show keen interest and listened to the villagers with consideration. The officials also told them that they will examine such situations more carefully in the future, and try to help the villagers as much as

they can.

We have one more request. In order to understand the background of the situation and policies of the Government, we would appreciate your explaining to us the following :

i) We would like to know when and with what understanding, the government decided as a policy to give degraded forest lands for captive plantations for industries, through joint sector companies like the KPL.

ii) We would also like to know whether the Chief Conservator of Forests (General) who is the Chairman and Managing Director of KPL is also the person who orders the transfer of lands in control of Forest Department to KPL. We are interested to know whether it is the same person or two persons.

We would be happy to meet you or your officials regarding the orders and documents about the land transfers to KPL so as to avoid unnecessary confrontation.

We look forward to receiving your kind reply.

With Best Regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Sd/-
Ranjan Rao Yerdoor
Secretary.

LETTERS

Dear Shri. Shyam Sunder,

July 15,1988

Sub: Violations of Supreme Court Stay Order and other matters regarding Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL)

Ref: Our earlier letter No.252/SPS-32/88 dated 13-6-1988.

As we have documented in our letter to you (reference 1), we are very much concerned by the gross violations of the Supreme Court stay order and the violations of the terms of agreement, by the KPL.

However, we have not received any reply from your office so far. As the matter is very serious, we are looking forward to receiving your early reply and to know about the appropriate action(s) you have taken.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully

Sd/-
RANJAN RAO YERDOOR

Copy with compliments to :

Secretary,
Dept of Environment,
Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

Sri.A.B.Datar,
Chief Secretary,
Government of Karnataka,
Bangalore.

Sri.B.S.Patil,
Secretary,
Animal Husbandary, Forest and Fisheries,
M.S.Building, Bangalore-560 001.

Citizens For Democracy

Founder	**Jayaprakash Narayan**	**Central Office:**
Adviser	V.M.Tarkunde	223,Deen Dayal
President	Kuldip Nayar	Upadhyay Marg,
Vice-Presidents	V.V. John	New Delhi-110002
	A.C. Sen	Phones: 3317491
	M.A. Rane	3317493
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16.7.88

Shri Ramakrishna Hegde
Hon'ble Chief Minister of
Karnataka
Vidhan Sabha
Bangalore-560001

Dear Shri Hegde,

You may have received my following telegrame sent yesterday.

DISTRESSED OVER YOUR GOVERNMENT GOING BACK ON AGREEMENT BETWEEN CHIEF SECRETARY ABOUT APPOINTING DOCTOR MADHAV GADGIL COMMISSION AND SUSPENDING EUCALYPTUS PLANTING IN DHARWAD DISTRICT BY KARNATAKA PULPWOOD LIMITED.

KINDLY INTERVENE OTHERWISE SATYAGRAHA ON AUGUST 8th REGARDS.

KULDIP NAYAR
PRESIDENT
CITIZENS FOR DEMOCRACY.
15.7.88.

Probably you know that I was to lead the Satyagraha in Kusnur scheduled on June 20, 1988 by the local organization Guddanadu Abhivrudhi Samiti, supported by the Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS) of Dharwad and other organizations. And I felt relieved when your Chief Secretary and his colleagues called on June 3, 1988, a meeting of the SPS representatives to avert the situation which was developing into a confrontation between the people and the Government.

As you know, there was as a result of this As you know, there was as a result of this meeting an agreement reached: Dr. Madhav Gadgil Commission was to go into the issue of common

lands with particular reference to KPL, and the KPL to suspend its operations in Dharwad district so as to enable the scheduled Satyagrahas on June 20, 1988 and July 4, 1988 to be postponed till Dr. Gadgil's verdict is available.

I learn that while the people have called off their Satyagrahas respecting the agreement, the Government has not yet issued any orders to implement their part of the agreement, i.e., to appoint Dr. Gadgil for the study and to suspend the KPL operation's; in fact my information is that the KPL operations are in full swing.

May I request you to look into the matter and to take appropriate steps so that the Government carries out its word? Knowing how deeply you are concerned about the welfare of the poor, you will take necessary steps to suspend KPL operations. I am sure I shall not have to travel to Bangalore to lead the Satyagraha to force the Government to carry out its promise. The Satyagraha is scheduled for August 8, 1988, the eve of the Quit India Day.

I look forward to hearing from you favourably soon.

With regards,
Yours Sincerely,

(KULDIP NAYAR)
PRESIDENT

SAMAJ PARIVARTANA SAMUDAYA (SPS)

"Ashadeep" Jayanagar Cross, Saptapur, DHARWAD-580 001, Karnataka, India.

No.642/SPS-28/88 August 1, 1988

Shri.Ramakrishna Hegde,
Hon.Chief Minister,
Government of Karnataka,
Bangalore-560 001.

Sub: 1) Request for your intervention so that the Government keeps its promise regarding Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd., (KPL) based on June 3,1988 meeting and

2) Request for action against the KPL and Forest Officials for the serious violations of the Supreme Court Stay Order, Central Government directions, the conditions of the agreement etc.,

Dear Shri.Hegde,

We are writing to request your kind intervention urgently so that the Government keeps the promise made by the senior-most Government Officials as a result of the meeting on June 3, 1988 in the Chambers of the Chief Secretary. The agreement reached between the Government and us is : 1)To appoint one man Commission Dr.Madhav Gadgil to go into the common lands issue with particular reference to KPL and 2) Government to suspend the KPL operations in Dharwad District and People to suspend the Satyagrahas scheduled on June 20, 1988 and July 4, 1988.

I) APPOINTMENT OF GADGIL COMMISSION :

Even though the Senior Officials had assured us in late June that the orders were being issued shortly about the appointment of the Commission, we have not received the orders as yet. However, the Secretary, Animal Husbandry, Forest and Fisheries assured us on the 30th of July when four of us met him that he was in contact with Dr.Madhav Gadgil and the Gadgil Commission would be appointed very soon. As it is around two months, we request you to kindly urge the officials to fulfil their assurance very soon.

II) KPL OPERATIONS IN FULL SWING AND SYMBOLIC SATYAGRAHA ON AUGUST 8th :

However, the KPL operations are continuing in Dharwad District in full swing inspite of the agreement that these will be suspended by the Government. This has greatly disappointed the villagers especially because the Deputy Commissioner, based on the June 3, 1988 meeting, had assured the villagers that KPL operations would be suspended with immediate effect and based on his word, they had suspended the Satyagrahas on June 20th and July 4th 1988. The villagers and we, as per our discussions with the Deputy Commissioner brought the violations by KPL to his kind attention

In view of this situation, the villagers have decided to have the symbolic Satyagraha on August 8th, the Quit India Day, protesting against continuation of planting by the KPL.

III) SERIOUS VIOLATIONS BY AND ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES OF KPL AND FOREST OFFICIALS :

Since we wrote to you on November 1, 1987, the Rajyostava day, several important developments have taken place. We have also tried to bring these matters systematically to the notice of the concerned officials. We tried to bring this to the notice of the Senior Officials in the meeting on 3-6-1988 and also wrote to Sri.Shyam Sunder, the Head of the Forest Department, on 13-6-1988 (A copy enclosed) and a reminder dated 15-7-1988. As we have received no response from him, we are trying to bring this to your kind notice. These developments are :

1) Violations of the Supreme Court Stay Order of March 24, 1987 :

The KPL Joint Managing Director, (a Harihar Polyfibre nominee) inspite of the stay order of the Supreme Court requested the Chief Conservator of Forest (General) on 25-8-1987 for a transfer of over 37,000 acres of land identified by him. The CCF (General) obliged this immediately by his order of September, 2 1987 transferring all the lands that the Joint Managing Director had asked for and in fact, enclosed the same annexures that were sent by KPL. Further, there was persistent follow-up of this and subsequent orders, by the HPF nominee and the CCF (General) respectively, with the result that lands were being illegally transferred while the Supreme Court was conducting the final hearing. This and other such orders and follow-up actions were carried out in flagrant violations of the Supreme Court Order.

Copies of all these illegal orders have been endorsed to Shri. Shyam Sunder, PCCF as the Head of the Forest Department.

2) Forest lands and Violation of the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 :

The Kusnur hill where we will be conducting the Satyagraha on August 8, 1988 is forest land (Reserve Forest) and is being held by KPL illegally against the Forest Conservation Act (1980).

The July 15, 1986 agreement between the Government and KPL confirms that it is forest land and the letter of the Government of India from Shri.T.N.Seshan, Secretary, Environment and Forests, New Delhi dated 3-8-1987 makes it clear that forest land should not be given to joint sector companies and if given, it should be cancelled. This letter of Shri.Seshan was based on the guidelines issued in 1984 and earlier.

We have written to the Forest Secretary on November 6, 1987 and again January 26, 1988 about this matter; the Central Government has most recently written to the Forest Secretary again clarifying their position (Letter No. 7-5/87 FC dated 19-5-1988) that forest lands should not be given to KPL and they should not be allowed to carry out operations at least until the Supreme Court gives its judgement. The KPL has defied this by planting eucalyptus this monsoons again which is what we are protesting.

3) Bulldozing of village gomal lands in Hulgad not given to KPL:

The villagers of Hulgaddi, in Hangal taluka tried to stop the KPL operations on their gomal lands by writing on 1-6-87 to the Forest Minister, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Dharwad and others. Even the MLA of the taluka wrote on 19-6-88 to the DCF. Inspite of the Minister and the DCF trying their best to help the villagers and to prevent valuable trees like Sandalwood being cut, the KPL bulldozed the area and the CCF (General) has later ordered transfer of not only forest lands meant for grazing of village cattle (S.No.107 to 110) but also one of the revenue gomal lands (S.No.113);

4) Bulldozing of RLEGP Plantations in Hirebasur village by the KPL:

The KPL bulldozed the 1985 RLEGP (Rural Landless

Employment Guarantee Programme) plantations on 25 hectares in Hirebasur thereby causing over Rs.80,000 loss to the Government; When the concerned officials and villagers did panchanama and tried to help the recovery of this amount to the Government, the KPL with the help of higher officials is trying not to pay this amount. The KPL staff bulldozed these lands against clear instructions and conditions that they should be bulldozed only after consulting the local Forest Officials.

There are many instances of this kind of behaviour on the part of the KPL and the higher officials, not only seem to support KPL, for reasons best known to them, but also order transfer of lands to the KPL that have been clearly recommended against by the field officers like the DCF.

5) Is KPL really a Government or at least Government controlled company?

There are so many evidences to show that it is the Harihar Polyfibre nominees who are in control of this company, not the officers of the Government, eg.,

i) The Joint Managing Director of KPL, a Harihar Polyfibre nominee, fully knowing that it is against the Supreme Court Stay Order and even acknowledging it in his letter of 25-8-87 addressed to the CCF (General), still goes ahead and asks for transfer of over 37,000 acres; The CCF (General) soon after receiving this letter obliges him by his order of 2-9-87 and transfers all lands asked for; This is only one of several such blind transfers.

ii) The Joint Managing Director asks that lands transferred to the KPL by the DCF of Sagar Division, without orders from the Government, may please be ratified and the CCF (General) obliges him immediately; In fact, the Joint Managing Director, under what authority best known to him, sends copies of his letter to the DCFs for action and follows-up with them as if they are working for him.

iii) The Joint Managing Director asks for lands earlier given to the Karnataka Forest Development Corporation in Kolar division which CCF (General) had wrongly given to KPL and CCF (General) writes to KFDC to give those lands to KPL.

iv) The Joint Managing Director asking for lands which he says are barren but the local DCF finds them

having valuable traditional trees or wood growth of more than 5 tons per acre and writes to CCF (General) that these cannot be given to KPL. However, the CCF (General), over-ruling the DCF, orders them to be transferred to the KPL; what is worse is this transfer was taking place against the Supreme Court Stay Order while the final hearings were going on in February 1988 in the Supreme Court.

v) The Joint Managing Director hides all these large scale illegal transfers and files an affidavit on 7-1-88 in the Supreme Court asking for vacation of stay; The government lawyers also support it thereby suppressing facts of transfers of over 37,000 acres in one order of 2-9-87 and also other such orders. By suppressing these vital facts, the KPL got a modification of the Stay Order on 26-4-88 for 3000 hectares of C and D Class of lands (and not forest lands). However, most of the lands transferred by the CCF (Gen) to KPL illegally is forest land. This made the SPS to initiate Court action in this regard on 18-7-1988 as Sri.Shyam Sunder did not respond to the SPS letter of 13-6-88.

vi) As a result of the meeting with us on 3-6-88, all the senior Government officers including the Chief Secretary, the Development Commissioner, the Home Secretary, the Forest Secretary, the Principal CCF, the CCF (General) who is also the Chairman and Managing Director of KPL and the Deputy Commissioner, Dharwad agree for suspending the KPL operations in Dharwad district. Based on this, the Deputy Commissioner gives firm assurance to villagers about it and asks them to suspend their Satyagraha and also to inform him of violations by the KPL. Inspite of all this, the violations by the KPL take place, on a large scale, in Dharwad district on 28-6-88 and later and these are brought to the attention of the Deputy Commissioner and the high officials in Bangalore; However, they all find themselves helpless to stop KPL operations in Dharwad District.

Such is the influence of Harihar Polyfibres on these officials. All these show that the Government is not in control of KPL but the Harihar Polyfibres nominees are.

6) Misrepresentation to the NABARD (National Bank on Agriculture and Rural Development)

All the documents filed by the Government of Karnataka,

the KPL and Harihar Polyfibres show that KPL had, as of the stay order date (24-3-87), only 3490.38 hectares. However, we have learnt from NABARD sources that the Karnataka Government and the KPL reported that it had 6151 hectares as on 24-3-87. Why this discrepency of 2500 hectares? Is it a move to misrepresent facts to NABARD to get more loans than KPL was entitled to? We are relieved to hear that NABARD has not released any money at all to KPL due to the Supreme Court Stay Order.

7) Misrepresentation of facts publicly by top Forest Officials in the article on World Envi ronment Day:

Inspite of all the above overwhelming evidence, in an article in the *Deccan Herald* on 5-6-88, Shri. Shyam Sunder, the Principal Chief Conser-vator of Forests (PCCF) and Shri. Parameshwarappa, the Chief Conservator of Forests (General) strongly defend that the Supreme Court stay order of 24-3-1987 had not been at all violated and also that the forest lands can be given to KPL under Forest Conservation Act 1980, inspite of clear stand of the Central Government to the contrary. The Forest Conservation Act (1980) is a Central act and clearly requires prior permission of the Central Government to transfer to forest land to joint sector companies. In fact, Shri. Seshan, the then Secretary of Environment, Department of Environment, New Delhi wrote to Shri. T.R.Satishchandran, the then Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka, Bangalore in December 1987 to explain why the State Government did not apply for permission. When a long letter was written by the State Government to the Dept. of Environment on 5-1-88, the Central Government not only reiterated its firm stand in the Supreme Court in February 1988 but also wrote to the State Government on 19-5-88 confirming their stand again and urging the State Government not to allow the KPL to plant in forest lands at least until the Supreme Court gives its decision.

Why are these high officials of the Forest Department out to favour this Joint Sector Company, KPL by violating Supreme Court Stay Order, not once but several times, flouting the directives of the Central Government based on the Forest Conservation Act (1980) and also supporting its other illegal activities causing loss to the public exchequer and to the rural people especially the poor (eg., bulldozing RLEGP plantations resulting in over Rs. 80,000 loss to the local community and heavy loss of bulldozing of valuable trees

like the sandal wood, matti, and teak in Hulgaddi and other areas).

Based on all above facts, in our strong opinion, this constitutes a serious attempt on the part of these officials to make the interests of the rural people especially the poor and the interests of the Government itself, subservient to the interests of the rich and powerful like the Harihar Polyfibres.

Since these are all very serious violations by the Forest Officials and KPL, we request you to immediately investigate these and initiate action against these KPL and Forest Officials.

We look forward to hearing from you,

With Best Regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Sd/-

Shivanandappa Banakar,
N.C.Doddamani,
Kenchappa Harijan,
Laxman Ilager,
C.G.Kalli,
R.V.Nagmule,
Rajanna Pattanshetty,
Sudha Pawar,
S.R.Ramaswamy,
Jyoti Veeranna
Manjanna Daivajna,
Shuju Foujdar,
S.R.Hiremath,
Sahibbi Kaginele,
Dileep Kamat,
Shankargowda Patil,
Dr.S.L.Pawar,
G.N.N.Prasad,
S.Sreekant,
Ranjan Rao Yerdoor).

Action Committee for Protection of Common Lands.

LETTERS

VIDHANA SOUDHA
BANGALORE-560001

Dated 20th Aug.1988.

SECRETARY TO THE
CHIEF MINISTER

CM.1429. DRP(2) 88

To:

M/s. Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS),
"Ashadeep", Jayanagar Cross,
Saptapur,
Dharwad-580 001.

Sirs,

May I refer to your letter dated 1-8-1988 addressed to Chief Minister about the KPL operations in Dharwad District? The Secretary, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Forest Department has been requested to examine and take suitable action in the matter.

Yours Sincerely,

(C.GOPAL REDDY)

KARNATAKA PULPWOOD LIMITED

Cresent Road, Bangalore.

No. KPL/11/87-88/1289. 25-8-1987

Chief Conservator of Forest (Gr),
Aranya Bhavan,
Bangalore-560 003.

Kind Attention: Sri. S. Parameshwarappa

As I had discussed in detail on 22nd August 1987, it would be against the spirit of the Supreme Court Interim Order for our Company to take up plantation in C & D class lands till the final decision is made in the Writ Petition No. 35 of 1987. Pending modification of Interim Orders by the Supreme Court, we may be permitted to take up site preparation and planting works during 1987 and 1988 rains for which instructions may kindly be issued to the local staff. The areas which were earlier requested for lease in favour oF our company for which the recommendation from the local staff are available for certain areas and for which requests from our company to the territorial Dy. Conservators of Forests have already been made and pending with them are enlisted below for your kind orders-

a) In our letter No. KPL/11/86-87/630-33 dt. 27-11-86 addressed to you and copied to the Dy. Conservator of Forests, Sagar Forest Div., We had requested for lease of following lands in Sagar Div. for our planting programme during 1987-88:

Sl. No.	Village	Sy.No.	Legal Status	Extent Available in ha.
1.	Kukkalale	13&14	M.F.	150.00
2.	Nirlamani	17&18	"	200.00
			Total	350.00 ha

The Dy. Conservator of Forests, Sagar Forests Div, in his letter dated 15-12-86 to the Conservator of Forest, Shimoga Circle, Shimoga has recommended transfer of 150.00 ha of Kukkalala village and mentioned that areas in Nirla-

mani will be reported separately after spot inspection. He had kindly instructed the R.F.O. concerned to permit us to take up site preparation and planting works. Accordingly, we are happy to inform that our Company has been able to plant up approx. 150.00 ha. in the above villages during 1987 rains. The balance area will be taken up for planting during 1988. Action taken by DCF, Sagar Forest Div. may kindly be ratified.

b) In our letter No. KPL/86-87/624 dated 17-3-1987 we had requested for a total of 4280 ha. as per our letter annexed as annexure 'A' to this letter. Out of the grassy blanks in Channagard, Karni, Kudru state forests, we have since surveyed on extent of 1318 ha. as per the letter annexed to this office letter No. KPL/11/87-88/697 dated 26-6-1987. The survey work will be continued for our future requirements in the remaining grassy blanks in Reserve Forests, mentioned therein. For our planting programme during the rains of 87, the local staff has permitted us to take up planting in the area adjacent to our existing plantations as under.

Sl. N.	Div.	Range	Village	Sy.No.	Legal Status	Extent.
1.	Shimoga	Thirtha halli	Bharathipura	110,111, 75 & 85	M.F.	60.00
2.	"	"	Tenkebylu	8	M.F.	20.00
3.	"	"	Tenginakoppa	8	M.F.	20.00
4.	"	"	Nertus	97,147	C & D	15.00
5.	"	"	Mulagilu	96,14,38	M.F.	60.00

.....

Total 175.00 ha.

LETTERS

The corrected list of lands planted by our company for the year 1987-88 onwards in Shimoga and Sagar Forest Divisions is enclosed in Annexure- 'B'. The above lands may kindly be added to Annexure 'B'. It is likely that the areas mentioned in the list will not be totally available, due to encroachements and local requests that once to be sent aside for exercise of privilege of the villages etc., The correct extent of area planted by us and survey sketches will be submitted to the local staff in due course.

c) You are aware that our company has been allotted land in Hirekerur and Hangal talukas during 1986 and 1987 for raising plantations. These are blank hills including in reserved or protected forests. Our field officer at Hirekerur has peramberlated dry barren hills in Hirekerur, Range of Gadag division forest, Honnalli range of Shimoga Forest Division, Shikharipura range of Sagar forest division and Hangal of Dharwad Division and has obtained copies of record of rights together with village maps from the village ascertants of concerned villages. The list of areas enlisted is enclosed in Annexure 'C'. Though the total extent of area has been mentioned as 5151.18 ha. it is expected that only 50% to 60% of the total area mentioned therin will only be fit for planting since the balance area are either encroached or under the exercise of privileges by villagers, or inaccessible or rocky. Sira the S.N. as in Annexure C and all blank areas in dry zone, it is requested that the concerned Forest Department staff may be requested to permit us to take up planting in the said area.

d) In this office letter No.KPL\11\85-86\1818 dated 27-11-86 addressed to the Dy.Con. of Forests, Chikmagalur forest division and copied to you, we had requested certain survey numbers in Kogile and Gutli villages of Mudigere taluk, consisting of a total extent of 1601.74 ha. out of which we have requested that 1000 ha. only is plantable. These areas are adjacent to Malur S.F. of Budigere Taluka where the population is very thin and the area available for exercise of privileges of grazing are too large. Our company has taken up plantation of approximately 100 ha. during the mansoons of 1987 and we hope to continue planting in these areas, at the rate of 150 ha. to 200 ha. in the coming years. List of lands in the above two villages is shown as annexure 'D'.

Out of the total available extent of 1601.74 ha. it is requested that only 1000 ha. may be ordered to be transferred in favour of our company and the balance could be retained for

the exercise of privileges of the villagers. These lands are all grassy blanks on hill caps. There is no growth, which could be collected even as fuel wood. The areas in question were pointed out by the Dy.Con. of forests, Chickmagalur during my visit to those areas to be taken up during 87 rains. It is requested that instructions to continue our activity in approximately 1000 ha. in the survey numbers mentioned in the above two villages may kindly be communicated to the Dy.Con. of Forest Chickmagalur.

e) In this office letter No. KPL/11/87-88/331 dt. 14-5-1987, we had requested for lease of some failed plantations in A.M. Palli of Kolar Forest Division and you were kind enough to order transfer of 278 ha. for lease to this company, in your No.B3/IND/CR/82-83 : 84 dt. 28-4-1987. However, the Managing Director, Karnataka Forest Development Corporation Limited had claimed that these areas have already been leased to his Corporation and was of the opinion that we should not take up planting therein. Inspite of taking up preliminary works, involving certain expenditure, our company has desisted from planting in the said area on the request of M.D.KFDC Ltd.,

In this office letter No.KPL/11/87-88/1174 dated 17-8-1987 we have given a statement of failed Eucalyptus plantations of Kolar Forest Division, consisting of 15,666 acres of 6266 ha. of old trench mound plantations and 2298 acres or 919 ha. of pit plantations, which deserve to be replanted with Eucalyptus. You are aware that many of these failed plantations, as in the case of Srinivaspura, Araga, Dalasanur etc., have already been taken up by KFDC Ltd., for intensive replanting. You are aware that the said corporation is intending to replant most of these failed plantations under a scheme to be prepared by them shortly. However, in view of the increase in the lease rent of these plantations to Rs.187/- per acre per annum, with effect from 1-4-1987, it is unwise to keep these lands un-planted for a long time. Similar series of failed plantations in the Forest Divisions of Bangalore, Bhadravathi, Shimoga etc. are also available to show that thousands of ha. of failed plantations deserve to be replanted immediately, for (a) better utilization of site and (b) stop encroachment by population. It is requested that a policy decision may be made by your goodself in consultation with the M.D., KFDC Ltd., to earmark the areas required to be planted by KFDC Ltd., in the next two or three years and make available the balance areas for planting by our Company. Similarly there are some of their eucalyptus plantation

programme, which have failed due to wrong technique adopted in the initial years of planting. It is necessary to take stock of failed plantations to undertake replanting either by KFDC Ltd., or by companies like KPL ltd., or Mysore Paper Mills, etc., since eucalyptus plantaions of KFDC Ltd., during the second phase are coming to a close, and the areas already allotted to them are in excess of their requirement may also be available for allottment of our company.

In view of the large requirements of lands for planting by our company in the forest five to six years and the availability of failed plantations and plantable areas already identified by K.F.D.C. Ltd., we request you to kindly hold urgent consultations with Managing Director, K.F.D.C. Ltd., and come to a quick decision in respect of allocation of areas for planting during 1987-88 and onwards.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

for Karnataka Pulpwood Limited.

sd/-

(N.S. Adkoli)
Jt. Managing Director.

Encl : a/a.

Copy with compliments to :

1) The Conservator of Forest, Shimoga Circle, Shimoga.
2) The Conservator of Forest, Belgaum Circle, Belgaum.
3) The Conservator of Forest, Kanara Circle, Dharwad District.

for Karnataka Pulpwood Limited.

sd/-

Jt. Managing Director.

Encl : Annexures A B C & D.

ENG/FOR/10.2

LETTERS

(TRANSLATED FROM KANNADA TO ENGLISH)

Chief Conservator of Forests (Gen)
Aranya Bhawan,
Malleswaram,
Bangalore,
dated 2-9-87.

Sl.No.B3-GND:CR:82-83-84

OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM

Sub: Transfer of degraded forest land to KPL for raising plantations,

Ref: 1) Jt. Managing Director's (KPL) letter No.KPL.11:87-88-1286 dated 25-8-87.

2) Official Memorandum from this office dated 28-4-87.

The Joint Mananging Director in his letter cited above has requested for the transfer of degraded forest lands from Shimoga, Sagar, Chickmagalur, Dharwad and Gadag forest divisions for raising of plantations during the monsoon of 1987-88.

It is hereby ordered that the lands listed in Annexures A,B,C and D be transfered under the following conditions.

a) The land required for the annual plantations of the Forest Department must be reserved.

b) Before the transfer of degraded forest lands (listed in the Annexures enclosed), they should be inspected and those yielding more than 5 tonnes/ha. of firewood and small timber must be retained within the control of the Department and only those with a lower yield should be transferred.

c) In the land transferred to KPL, fruit trees and other large trees should be protected.

d) Sandal, teak, beete and other valuable trees must be protected.

Steps should be taken to inspect and transfer the lands listed in the Annexure to the above Corporation and a report should be immediately filed.

sd/-

Chief Conservator of Forest (Gen).

Copy with compliments to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests for your kind information.

Copy sent to the Conservators of Forests, Shimoga, Sagar, Dharwad and Belgaum Circles.

Copy sent to Deputy Conservator of Forests, Shimoga, Sagar, Gadag, Chickmagalur, and Dharwad for further action and reporting.

Copy with compliments sent to Managing Director, KPL Corporation, Bangalore.

Sd/-

Chief Conservator of Forests.

ENG/FOR/12.

Annexures, A,B,C,D, Enclosed in the Kannada Original (KAN/FOR/12)

Post Script

PROTEST MOVEMENT AGAINST KPL GATHERS MOMENTUM :

AUGUST 8TH KUSNUR SATYAGRAHA AND AFTER

A Kittiko Hachchiko (Pluck and Plant) Satyagraha in Kusnur on August 8th 1988, the Quit India day, ended in the arrest of 52 persons, men and women from Kusnur cluster of villages in Hangal Taluka, Dharwad District, who were protesting against the Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd. (KPL). This was a symbolic Satyagraha to protest the continued plantation operations by the KPL inspite of the promise of the highest officials of the State to the contrary and confirmation of the same by the Deputy Commissioner, Dharwad.

A detailed memorandum was submitted to the Chief Minister dated August 1, 1988 (reproduced under letters elsewhere in the book) urging him to appoint Madhav Gadgil Commission as decided by the highest officials of the Government in the meeting on June 3, 1988 with the activists of the Action Committee for the Protection of Common Lands in the chamber of the Chief Secretary and also to take urgent action against the Forest and KPL officials for the flagrant violations of the Supreme Court stay order, Central Government directives based on the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, harassment of local people etc.

A meeting was held on August 23rd and 24th, 1988 in Haveri to take stock of the developments in the movement so far, including the evaluation of the August 8th Satyagraha and plan for the future course of action. Over 60 villagers and activists participated. The meeting started with several villagers mentioning about the fact reported by many newspapers that the new Chief Minister Sri.S.R.Bommai even before taking oath of the office, recognized in his press conference, about the opposition of the people to eucalyptus in Kusnur area and told that he had talked with the management of the Harihar Polyfibres about it and that they had agreed not to plant the eucalyptus in Kusnur area. However all the participants felt that the issue is the reclaiming of common lands by the villagers and not of eucalyptus. Neither is the problem of just Kusnur area and the KPL agreement has to be cancelled. They, therefore, felt that the movement must spread to other areas.

Evaluation of the August 8th Satyagraha :

In the evaluation of the Satyagraha of August 8th the following were mentioned as significant good points :

The Participants compared the Satyagraha with the previous one held on November 14, 1987 and observed that this time there was much more discipline and order in the whole programme and this was attributed to effective training and careful selection of satyagrahis. Apparently the satyagrahis had understood the significance of adhering to the principles of truth and non-violence for achieving the final goal of social justice.

The participants noted with satisfaction the fact that the support of the poor from other areas - like the pollution affected people from the villages on the banks of the river Tungabhadra and also that of variousVoluntary Organisations from various parts of Karnataka was heart-warming.

The songs sung during the Satyagraha were very relevant and along with the oath taken by the Satyagrahis to follow the principles of truth and non-violence provided a very solemn bearing to the whole programme.

Since the proportion of local villagers among the arrested Satyagrahis was very high - only 4 among the 52 arrested were non-locals- it gave a fitting reply to the vested interests who were accusing the movement against KPL as one being run by outsiders.

What emerged as the most significant outcome of the Satyagraha during the evaluation was the fact that the arrested Satyagrahis lost their fear of the police and their fearlessness has also spread to other villagers who are now wishing to be part of the next such and other direct action programmes.

Looking back at the weaknesses of the organisation during the Satyagraha the following points were sought to be improved upon in the future :

Though women did play an important role in the movement - among the arrested Satyagrahis six were women - it was felt that special efforts would have to be made so that their participation and proportion increases substantially.

It was strongly felt by many participants that lot of efforts will have to be systematically made to see that the local people do not get divided along the political party lines and the people's movement does not wrongly get identified with one political party.

The KPL, this time, succeeded in bribing a few villagers who went to the Deputy Commissioner, Dharwad and supported the KPL planting operations in the common lands. It was felt that since some of these villagers have already expressed their mistake of collaboration with KPL and desire to join the movement, we need to adopt the policy of forgive and forget.

Some self-criticism was made about the behaviour of the Satyagrahis vis-a-vis the Government officials. It was observed that only a few people in the front of the march had discussed with police and knew about the preventive arrest, where as the rest were totally in the dark as to why they are being arrested and they should have asked about it.

Another thing that needs to be thoughtfully planned in the future direct actions is a back-up action plan. On August 8 when the 52 Satyagrahis were arrested, the Satyagraha was simply concluded. Next time, enough Satyagrahis should be ready who would go one batch after other.

Future Plans :

In the Haveri meeting, there was a strong feeling that the movement must be broad based and must spread to other areas. Several specific steps were taken in this regard :

1) Convening of the Action Committee for the Protection of Common Lands and inviting the representatives of peoples' groups and voluntary agencies from various districts to chalk out a collective strategy for spreading the movement to other areas and also seeking the support of the State Level Coordinating Committee of the Save the Western Ghats-Movement, Karnataka (SWGM-K);

2) Involving women more actively in the movement and also persons of all backgrounds

including all political parties to further strengthen the movement;

3) Conducting a signature campaign in all areas affected by KPL;

4) Exploring legal initiatives in local-courts, just as the village Baad village in Dharwad District and some groups in Shimoga district have done;

5) Initiating contact with similar organisations working for social change for joining the future protests. It was decided that widespread protests should be organized around November 14, 1988, the fourth anniversary of the foundation of KPL.

The SWGM-K meeting on September 2, 1988 unanimously decided to extend its support to the Action Committee for weeklong protests beginning November 14, 1988. The meeting of the Action Committee for the Protection of Common Lands has been scheduled for September 21, 1988 to chalk out the future course of action. In Kusnur, special women's camp on September 12, 1988 was held in which about one hundred women participated actively and a similar camp being held in Somasagar on September 19, 1988.

* *

The Satyagrahis being hoarded into the police van pre-empting their non-violent direction. Kusnur : Aug. 8, 1988

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Of late, environmental consciousness has been growing among different sections of people. More and more people are realising now that degradation of environment means increasing the misery of the poor. The growing environmental consciousness doesn't mean, however, that the ecological problems are over. Far from it, the rate at which governmentization and privatization of common property resources like forestry, village common lands, rivers, lakes, tanks and vallies has been taking place is really devastating. But the ray of hope lies in the fact that it is the affected people who are getting organised to cry halt to the bull-dozing of nature.

The movement of the people of Kusnur and surrounding villages in Dharwad district of Karnataka, to reclaim their common lands is one such case.

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